

20 VOLUMES IN THE SERIES

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- 2. Folk Tales of Tamilnadu by K.A. Seethalakshmi**
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F O L K T A L E S O F T A M I L N A D U

K. A. SEETHALAKSHMI



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GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Folklore in the different parts of India is a rich legacy for us. While researches in ancient and modern history have been directed in recent decades more to the succession of kings and political shifts not much notice has been paid to the culture, complex traditions and social beliefs of the common people. The sociologists have also to pay a good deal of attention to the customs and beliefs of the people and changes therein through the ages. They have rather neglected the study of folklore which is a reliable index to the background of the people. There has always been an easy mobility of the folklore through pilgrimages, *melas* and fairs. The wandering minstrels, *sadhus* and *fakirs* have also disseminated them. People of the North visiting the temples of the South and *vice versa* carry their folk-tales, songs, riddles and proverbs with them and there is an inconspicuous integration. The *dharamsalas*, inns and the *Chattis* (places of rest where the pilgrims rest and intermingle) worked as the clearing house for the folk tales, traditional songs and riddles. That is why we find a somewhat common pattern in folk literature of different regions. The same type of folk tale will be found in Kashmir and in Kerala with different regional complex. These stories were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth before they came to be reduced to writing.

Folklorists have different approaches to the appreciation of folklore. Max Muller has interpreted the common pattern in folk literature as evidence of nature-myths. Sir L. Gomme thought that a historical approach is the best for the study of folklore. But Frazer would rather encourage a commonsense approach and to him old and popular folk literature is mutually interdependent and satisfies the basic curiosities and instincts of man. That folklore is a vital element in a living culture has been underlined in recent years by scholars like Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown.

It is unfortunate that the study of folklore in India is of very recent origin. This is all the more regrettable because the *Panchatantra* stories which had their origin in Bihar had spread through various channels almost throughout the world. As late as in

1859, T. Benfey had held that there is an unmistakable stamp of Indian origin in most of the fairy tales of Europe. The same stories with different twists or complexes have come back to us through Grimm and Aesop and the retold stories are greedily swallowed by our children. That India has neglected a proper study of the beautiful motifs of our folk tales is seen in the fact that the two large volumes of dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend published by Messrs Funk and Wagnalls and Company of New York have given a very inadequate reference to India.

What is the secret of the fascination of the folk tales that the old, young and the children are kept enthralled by their recitals ? The same story is often repeated but does not lose its interest. The secret is the satisfaction that our basic curiosity finds in the folk tales. The folk tales through phantasies, make-beliefs and complacent understanding help the primitive man to satisfy his curiosity about the mysteries of the world and particularly the very many inexplicable phenomena of nature around him. We have an element of primitiveness in our mind in spite of the advancement of science around us. Even a scientist finds great delight in the fairy tales of the moon being attacked as the origin of the lunar eclipse. Through the folk tales man exercised his once-limited vision and somehow or the other we would like to retain that limited vision even when we have grown up. The advancement in science can never replace the folk tales. On the other hand, folk tales have helped the scientific curiosity in the man. In spite of the scientific explanation as to why earthquakes take place, the old, young and the child would still be delighted to be told that the world rests on the hood of the great snake and when the snake is tired with the weight, he shakes the hood and there is an earthquake. Among the Mundas, an aboriginal tribe in Bihar, there is a wonderful explanation of the Orion. The sword and belt of the Orion, the Mundas imagine, form their appropriate likeness to the plough and plough-share which the supreme *Sing Bonga* God first shaped in the heavens and then taught people on earth how to use the plough and the plough-share. It is further in the Munda folk tale that while the *Sing Bonga* was shaping the plough and the plough-share with a chisel and a hammer he observed a dove hatching on its eggs at a little distance. The *Sing Bonga* threw his hammer at the dove to

bag the game. He missed his mark and the hammer went over the dove's head and hung on a tree. The hammer corresponds to the Pleiads which resembles a hammer. The Aldebaran is the dove and the other stars of Hyades are the eggs of the dove. Any illiterate Munda boy will unmistakably point out these star groups.

Weather and climate have their own stories and are often connected with particular stages of the crops. The wet season and the hottest month are intimately associated with the ripening of crops or the blossoming of trees or the frequency of dust storms and stories are woven round them. But nothing is more satisfying as a folk story than the explanation of the phases of the stars, moon and the sun. A Munda would point out the milky way as the *Gai Hora* i.e. the path of the cows. The *Sing Bonga* God leads his cows every day along this path—the dusky path on the sky is due to the dust raised by the herd. The dust raised by the cows sends down the rains. A story of this type can never fail to sustain its interest in spite of all the scientific explanation of the astral bodies.

The “why and therefore” of the primitive mind tried to seek an answer in the surrounding animal and plant kingdom. Animals are grouped into different categories according to their intelligence and other habits. The fox is always sly while the cow is gentle. The lion and the tiger have a majestic air while the horse is swift, sleek and intelligent. The slow-going elephant does not forget its attendant nor does he forget a man that teases him. Monkeys are very near the mankind. The peacock is gay while the crow is shrewd. The tortoise is slow-going but sure-footed. The hare is swift but apt to laze on the road. The primitive mind is not unintelligent to decipher these inherent characteristics of the common animals he meets. Similarly, when he sees a large and shady peepal tree he naturally associates it as the abode of the sylvan god. The thick jungle with its trees and foliage is known to be frequented by thieves and dacoits. Any solitary hut in the thick of the forest must be associated with someone unscrupulous or uncanny. These ideas are commonly woven into stories and through them the primitive mind seeks to satisfy the eternal why and how of the mind. Folk literature is often crude and even grotesque. The stories of the witches and the ogres come in this category. There is nothing to be surprised

at that. They reflect the particular stage of the development of the human mind and also a projection of the beliefs and fads of the mind. Scientific accuracy should never be looked for in folk tales although folk tales are a very good reflex of the social development of a particular time.

It is enough if the basic ideas regarding the animal and plant kingdom still satisfy that the donkey is dense or stupid or the snake typifies slyness and the fox is deceitful repeated in ancient folk tales have stood the test of age and that would show that the primitive mind was not foolish or credulous. The very idea that the folk tales have woven man, nature, animal and plant creation together shows the great flight of imagination and a singular development of mind. Introduction of moral lessons or any dogma was not done as an after-thought but came in as a very natural development.

The last source of the folk tales is human society itself. The elemental moorings that are at the root of human society are sought to be illustrated in folk tales. The day to day life of the common man finds its full depiction in the folk tales. Parental love, family happiness, children's adventurous habits, love and fear for the unknown, greed etc. are some of the usual themes of folk tales. The common man yearns for riches and comforts, he cannot usually look for. He dreams of riches, princes, kingdoms etc. and finds a satisfaction in stories of fantasy. Men love gossip and scandal. Women cannot keep secrets, children will love their parents, a mother-in-law will always think the daughter-in-law needs to be told—these are some of the basic ideas that make up much of our daily life. The folk tales are woven round them and whether fantastic or with a moral undertone they only reflect the daily chores, tears and joys of the common man.

Unknowingly, the folklorists bring in the religious custom, beliefs, food habits, modes of dress, superstitions etc. and thereby leave a picture of the culture-complex of the region and its people. A tribal story does not picture a king riding a white big foaming horse followed by hundreds of other horsemen going for a *shikar*. In a tribal story the Raja will be found cutting the grass and bringing back a stack of it for feeding his cows but a folk tale more current in urban areas will have large palaces, liveried-servants, ministers and courtiers in the king's court. All this only means that the time and the venue of the origin of the stories are widely different. It

is here that the sociologists and the anthropologists come in useful. As life is different in rural and urban areas or is chequered with goodness or badness of the world so is folk literature diversified, as it must be—being a replica of life.

It is a pity that these beautiful folk tales in India were almost on the point of disappearance when a few pioneers mostly consisting of foreign missionaries and European scholars looked into them and made compilations in different parts of India. Our present run of grandmothers knows very little of them. The professional story tellers who were very dearly sought after by the old and the young, not to speak of the children, have almost completely disappeared from India. The film industry and the film songs pose a definite threat to folklore.

The Sterling Publishers are to be congratulated for launching the project of publishing a compilation of 20 volumes consisting of the folk tales of different regions. The work has been entrusted to specially selected writers who have an intimate knowledge of their region. The regional complex of the stories has been sought to be preserved as far as possible. The stories have an elemental involvement about them and they are such that are expected to appeal to the child and its parents. We expect the reader of the folk tales of the particular region to have a feeling after a study of the stories that he has enjoyed a whiff of air of that area. We want him to have an idea of how Kashmiri folks retire in wintry nights with the *Kangri* under the folds of their clothes to enjoy gossips and how they enjoy their highly spiced meaty food. We want him to appreciate the splash of colour of the sari and the flowers that are a must in Tamilnadu. We want him to know the stories that are behind some of the famous temples in the South as Kanjeevaram temple. We want him to know the story regarding the construction of the famous Konarak temple. We want him to enjoy the stories of the heroes of Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan in their particular roles. We want the reader to have an idea of the peace and quiet of a hut in the lap of the Kumaon hills. We want the reader to enjoy some of the folk tales of Bengal and Bihar that have found wings in other parts of India and to appreciate the village life with their *Alpana* and *Bratas*. At the same time we want the reader to appreciate the customs and manners of the Santhals, Garos, and the other tribes inhabiting Nefu and Assam.

The Publishers want to have a miniature India in these volumes of folk tales of the different regions of India. It is an ambitious project. The authors have to be thanked for their interest in the work. I am sure they have enjoyed the assignment. It is hoped the books will be found useful and interesting to the public. I have no hesitation to say that the stories of the different areas do make out a miniature India. It is hoped the reader will enjoy the stories and will come to know a little of the region and its people.

P. C. Roy Chaudhury

P R E F A C E

Folk Tales all over the world are interesting and instructive. They give us an insight into the culture of ancient times, of the people who handed them to us by word of mouth from grandmother and grandfather to the grandchildren and so on till some of them were collected and printed. They have their morals and they also contain popular beliefs in the background of social customs. Folk Tales are a valuable heritage.

• Folk Tales have a value of their own. They indicate the customs, traditions, manners, good habit., rites that may have died out; customs and ornaments of the particular region. Folk tales are not absolutely confined to a region and different versions of the same tales could be found in other regions. But there is a sweet regional flavour in the folk tales which should not be allowed to die.

The Folk Tales of Tamilnadu presented here have been collected from different sources. Grandmothers have been tapped and some of the published books in Tamil were looked into for a check up. Investigations were done in some villages with the hope that they will delight the young and old and show them the moral values which our ancients cherished. Each generation has to affirm these moral values and I hope that the Folk Tales will help us in the process. That they will claim a great deal of attention and will hold the interest of the public can be justifiably expected.

K. A. Seethalakshmi

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KANJI VARADAPPA*

ONCE a beggar in Kancheepuram went begging from house to house. But he failed to get even one morsel of food. He got very angry and started cursing the town. He started walking and ultimately came in front of a Vaishnavite's house. As he was very tired he rested in the verandha of that house. He could not possibly sleep as he was very hungry.

At that time a Vaishnavite after saying his prayers at the Kanji Varadaraja Perumal's¹ temple was thinking of God and murmured to himself "Kanji Varadappa" and folded his hands.



* *Kanji* here stands for Kancheepuram. Varadappa is Lord Krishna's name.

¹ *Perumal* is another name of God.

Kanji is water drained out of cooked rice. In South India poor people drink this Kanji along with a pinch of salt to add to the taste.

Varadappa in Tamil means it is coming.

The beggar who was resting in front of a Vaishnavite's house and who was very hungry having heard "*Kanji Varadappa*" mis-interpreted the invocation. He thought of something else. The beggar thought the brahmin was saying "*Kanji*" is coming. Suddenly he bounced from his bed and asked, "Where is it coming?"*

When he saw a religious minded man folding his hands and saying God's prayers, he felt much embarrassed and retraced the steps. The Brahmin saw all this. He felt very much disgusted and felt pity for the beggar. The Brahmin called the beggar and said, "O, beggar ! You come to my house I shall give you *Paisam*."*

The beggar had his fill at the Brahmin's place.

●●●

** *Paisam* is rice cooked in creamy milk with sugar in it.

KOYAKATTAI

KOYAKATTAI, a favourite food item, is made with rice. Rice is soaked in water for a short time and water drained off. The rice is then ground into a thin paste and cooked with water. Green coconut is finely grated and mixed with gur. A little water is put on the fire in an *Urli** and then the Gur and coconut mixture is put and stirred well for a long time till it can be rolled into a ball. The cooked rice is taken and spread with the help of a little ghee. Small balls of coconut and gur are put inside the cooked rice and well covered with it. A little projection is made called the nose of Koyakattai. These are then cooked in steam.

Once upon a time there was a foolish man named Raman in a town. One day Raman went to his mother-in-law's place. She prepared Koyakattai and gave it to him. He liked Koyakattai very much and asked its name. His mother-in-law said, "Its name is Koyakattai." He decided that he will ask his wife to prepare Koyakattai. All the days he stayed there he went on repeating the word Koyakattai so that he may not forget it. After a few days at his mother-in-law's place Raman started for his house. All the way he was repeating the word Koyakattai so that he may not forget it. On the way he saw a river. That was a very narrow river. So he thought of jumping over. While he was just going to cross the river another person from the opposite side also was crossing the same river. Raman jumped and suddenly he fell down. The man who was crossing from the opposite side said, "Oh ! You have fallen down "*Pottakdi*". Pot-takdi is only a word which is added with the word 'falling down' to show effect. Raman forgot the

* *Urli* is just like a pan but it is made of brass.

word which he was repeating and he started saying *Pottakdi*.

Finally he reached home and on seeing his wife he said, "Please make *Pottakdi* and give it to me." She did not understand him and said, "I do not know the method of preparing *Pottakdi*," Raman got very angry and said, "Your mother knows it. How is it that you do not know it. You are telling a lie." He did not even have the patience to hear her. He took a stick and started beating her. By chance, a neighbour came there to borrow some sugar for her guests. On seeing Raman beating his wife she said, "Why are you beating your wife like this ? Can't you see her hands and legs have swollen like a *Koyakattai*."

As soon as he heard the word *Koyakattai* he knew he was wrong in giving the name to his wife. He felt sorry that he had beaten his wife blue. He turned round and requested his wife to prepare *Koyakattai*. The good wife pardoned him, smiled and prepared *Koyakattai*. Raman fully enjoyed the dish and felt very bad that he had given a beating to his wife.



FORTUNE FAVOURS THE BRAVE

A Brahmin once started the construction of his house on an auspicious day. Each day he used to consult the almanac for Rahu Kalam* etc. and build the house. But it took him twenty long years to build a very fine house. On an auspicious day he shifted to that house with the chanting of vedic hymns and Nadasuram.** As soon as it became dark some sound was heard. It seemed as if it was saying, "I am falling down." The brahmin was terrified on hearing this and thought that if the newly built house falls down his wife and children will be buried under it. He shifted back to his own old house.

The newly built house was left as it was and not occupied by any one. People started saying that there were ghosts in it. For many years nobody went there.

In that town there was a beggar. He wanted a shelter in the rainy season for himself, his wife and two children. He came to the brahmin and said, "Will you please allow me to stay in your house for sometime, I shall pay you the rent." The brahmin who was in search of a person willing to stay in the house, was happy to hear this and said, "You may gladly go and stay over there. It is a big house. You need not pay me any rent."

The beggar also heard the same sound at night. The beggar thought that as he was very poor and as he

* *Rahu Kalam* is that particular time of the day which is considered to be inauspicious to start any good work.

** *Nadasuram* means a song accompanied by beating of drums, ringing of bells with the help of 'Kinnaram' and 'Shahnai' with the help of Melam. Kinnaram consists of two bell shaped metals which when struck produces a rhythmical sound. Shahnai is a well known musical instrument of flute category. Melam is a tabla which is beaten by hand keeping with the rhythm,

was finding it very difficult to make both ends meet and if the house falls on him he will be relieved of all worries. Thinking this he said, "Fall down." No sooner had he said this than the gold coins started showering like rain from heaven. He gathered them and bought sarees, dresses, ornaments etc. with that money and also built a very fine house. People came to know about all this. The owner of the house also came to know about it. He came to the beggar and asked him the ways of his becoming a richman. The beggar narrated all that happened.

The owner of the house came and stayed with the beggar in that house for the night. They again heard the same voice. The owner said, "Fall down." Suddenly gold coins started falling down like arrows from heaven. But to the owner they all looked like snakes. He called the beggar and said, "My father used to say that the lucky one will get it. Only now I am realizing this. This house is now yours. Whatever you offer me I will accept that." He praised the beggar for some time and went away.

From that day onwards the beggar used to give half of whatever he got from the house to the brahmin also.



A GIBBET AND A KOMATTI*

THERE was a businessman named Anguchetty in a town. He earned a lot by his business but as he was extravagant he could not save anything. His house fell down in a big storm. He called the masons and set it right. In those days only mud houses were there.

A burglar came to the house of Anguchetty. He made a big hole in the wall and when he was just going to enter the house the wall fell down on him and he died.

The next morning a relative of the burglar went to the King and said, "My cousin died because the wall of Anguchetty's house fell down on him. So he must be hanged." The King who was a little dull called Anguchetty and said, "Why did you have a wet wall which fell on the burglar and he died." Anguchetty said, "Swami** I do not know anything. This is the fault of the mason who built the wall." The King sent for the mason and repeated the same question. The mason said, "Your majesty: It is not my fault. The person who brought the mud is to be blamed. He gave me wet mud. What am I to do?" The King then asked the man, who gave wet mud to the mason, the same question. He said, "Worthy King! That is not my fault. The potter gave me a *Kudam**** which had a big mouth." The King then enquired the potter. The potter said, "Sir ! When I was sitting on the potter's wheel with mud in my hand to make this *Kudam* a lady was passing that way. As I was looking

* *Komatti* - Komattis are vaishyas. They belong to the business community.

** *Swami* is the way of addressing respected persons in South India.

*** *Kudam* is a pot which is used for carrying water.

at her I could not concentrate on my work, hence I made the Kudam like that.” He called the lady and asked the reason of her passing that way when the potter was busy making the Kudam. She said, “King ! I had given some gold to a goldsmith to make necklace for me. But as he failed to give me the same on the appointed date I was going to his shop to get it.” The King then called the goldsmith and asked the reason of his not delivering the ornament in time. The goldsmith was not in a position to give any sound answer.

The King then said, “The goldsmith alone is responsible for the death of the burglar.” He ordered that the goldsmith be hanged.

The goldsmith then looked at *Komatti* who was working in the King’s court and said, “King ! That *Komatti* asked for some gold some time ago and I did not give him. This fault is *Komatti*’s and not mine. Moreover what connection have I with that gibbet ?



That gibbet is so big and I am so thin. *Komatti* is the person fit enough for the gibbet". The King thought that the goldsmith was saying the right thing and he ordered that the *Komatti* be hanged.

When the *Komatti* was worrying over this, a few persons decided to save him. Two out of them thought of a plan and started quarrelling. The King asked them what the matter was. One said, "King! According to the almanac who-so-ever is hanged at this time by this gibbet will go to heaven straight and become a King in the next birth. I had a strong desire of becoming a King, when I have told him this he is not letting me take the opportunity and he wants to go in my place. This is the only point of quarrel". The King said, "Who is that person who wants to rule in my Kingdom? Can anybody else become a king in my country? I alone will rule here. Hang me now." All the men quickly hanged the King and made a wise man the King of that country.



5

VIDAMUNDAN AND KODAMUNDAN

VIDAMUNDAN means those persons who are determined to take things from persons who are not willing to part with them. *Kodamundan* means those persons who never part with their things.

There was a great *Kodamundan* in a place called Thiruvella. Every day he used to bring ten *Padi** rice from different houses telling them that he had to feed the brahmins. He cleverly avoided, everybody who came to take food in his house by saying, "Today ten brahmins are already taking food in our house. Please come tomorrow." In this way he used to make one excuse or the other and never gave even one morsel of food to anybody. He and his wife were thus passing their days merrily.

In the same town there was another brahmin named *Vidamundan*. His idea was to get food from persons who never used to part with their things. He heard the name of *Kodamundan* and also came to know about all his actions. He was determined to take food in *Kodamundan's* place.

One fine morning he went to *Kodamundan's* house and told him his desire of taking food in his house that day. *Kodamundan* said, "Today I have already invited ten brahmins. Please come tomorrow." *Vidamundan* who had decided to take food there thought of coming the next day and left. The next morning he reached at the same time and said, "As you asked me to come today so I have come." *Kodamundan* was now in a fix. He came to know that ordinary excuses will not be enough to drive him away.

* *Padi* - is a measurement for rice,

• He went inside the house and consulted his wife. He asked his wife to lie down in bed and pretend as if she was having severe headache. He then came out and said to *Vidamundan*, "It is true that I invited you today. But as my wife has been suffering from severe headache since yesterday night so there will not be any *Anna Dan* to brahmins till she gets well. As soon as she becomes well I shall send for you. You kindly come and take food that day." *Vidamundan* said, "For such a small reason how can you refuse brahmins from taking food? I know cooking. Let me, quickly tie my *dhoti* and enter the kitchen. You also come. We both will cook and eat and prepare *Pongal** for your wife."

Kodamundan did not know what to do. He thought that he would make him cook and would drive him away without serving him food. He further thought that his wife would be saved from the botheration of cooking. He said to *Vidamundan*, "Come let us cook." As soon as the food was ready *Kodamundan* said, "I have only one plantain leaf to take food on. Please go and bring another." *Vidamundan* agreed and went out.

Kodamundan then went to his wife and said, "I have saved you from the botheration of cooking food. Now I have sent him to bring plantain leaf. As soon as he comes back you start quarrelling with me. I will beat you and you start weeping loudly. When he see s all this he will go away."

Vidamundan, who had gone out to bring a plantain leaf came at that time. The husband and wife started quarelling as planned. The wife said. "What is this ? Who-so-ever come to this house you

* *Pongal* is prepared by cooking rice and moong dal together and adding little salt. Fried cumin seeds and black pepper are put to add to the flavour,

give them food. We do not have anything left for tomorrow. Why do you not think about the house?"

The husband then said, "If I feed the brahmins why should you feel bad ? I am spending only my hard earned money. I am not taking money from your father." Saying this he got up and started beating the wall with all his strength. The wife started weeping loudly.

Vidamundan who was watching all this thought that it was not proper for him to go in front of them at that time. He went to the store room near the kitchen and sat near the cow dung cakes. This went on for quite sometime. When Kodamundan got tired after beating the wall for a long time he came out and did not find Vidamundan there. He told his wife that the guest had left and that they should take the food. He served the cooked food in two plantain leaves.

When they were thus seated to take food the husband said, "I beat you without hurting you." The wife said, "I wept constantly." Vidamundan who was hiding himself near the kitchen said, "I also came back without going away." Saying this he quickly jumped from that place and sat in front of the plantain leaf where food was already served. Kodamundan had no other way out but to serve him also food. He served food to him.

Vidamundan thus had a nice hearty lunch in the house of Kodamundan.



6

A LOGICIAN AND AN OIL MERCHANT

ONE day a logician went to an oil merchant's place to buy sesame oil. While he was buying oil, the mill was working. The oil merchant had tied bells around each bull's neck. While the bulls were going round, the bells were ringing.

The logician asked the oil merchant, "Why have you tied the bells round the bull's neck?" The merchant said, "When the mill is working, I am not here all the time. I sometimes go and work inside the house. The bells help me in knowing whether the bulls are standing in one place or going round. When they stop I cannot hear ringing of the bell. Then I come out and drive them and they start moving again" The logician again asked, "If the bulls shake their heads without moving from their place then also the bells will ring. What will you do then?" The oil merchant said, "Well ! For your kind information my bulls are not famous logicians. So they will not shake their heads without moving round the mill."

The logician felt ashamed and went back home.



THE IMPORTANCE OF LIGHTING

ONCE there was a big business man. He had a son and a daughter. The brother and the sister had great regards for each other. They decided that in case a daughter was born to one and a son to another they would marry them together so that their friendship and bond continued. The son had three sons and the daughter had three daughters. The business man became old and one day he passed away. As he was in debt the creditors took away a large portion of his money, with the result that his son became quite a poor man.

The business man's daughter was married to a rich man. He prospered in his business also. He gave two of his daughters in marriage to two business men who were rolling in wealth and both the husband and the wife were busy in settling the marriage of their third daughter. At that time the third daughter reminded their parents of the promise they had made to her uncle. She also told that all her cousins were refusing to marry till she also got married and that she would marry one of her cousins only.

When her mother heard this she was stunned. She said, "Both of your sisters have been married in rich families. If you marry a poor man, who will give you only *Kuya*,* how will they respect you?" She further said, "If you insist on marrying your cousin I will push you in their house and will never think of you."

The girl did not give way. She had decided to marry one of her cousins only.

* *Kuya* - Raguee is powdered and cooked in water. A little salt is put to add to the taste. It is eaten along with red chillies.

The girl's mother had no other way out. She sent word to her brother that she will give her youngest daughter in marriage to one of his sons. When her brother heard this his happiness knew no bounds. He made all kinds of arrangements and the marriage was celebrated. His other two sons were married in a poor family. The youngest daughter's parents never came to see her and enquire about her welfare.

She was very happy in the poor man's family and never showed as if she was a rich lady. All the three brothers earned their living by stitching bunyan leaves and selling them in the market. In this way they were passing their days in extreme poverty.

The King of that place was one day having his oil bath. He had taken out his ring and had kept it on the floor. Suddenly an eagle came and took away the ring and dropped it in the house of the business man's son. At that time only the youngest daughter-in-law was in the house. She picked up the ring and tied it at the edge of her sari and did not tell anyone about it.

The King saw the eagle taking away his ring. He made an announcement by beat of drum that who-so-ever brings the ring and gives it to him will be given whatever he asks for. The youngest daughter came to know of this announcement. She went and told her husband about it and said, "Let us go and give it to the King. One thing I may tell you that I will never ask for riches. Whatever I ask from the King you must be satisfied with that. You should never get angry with me." Her husband agreed and both of them went to the palace and gave the ring to the King.

The King was happy to find his ring and he asked them what they wanted. The lady said, "Your majesty ! I do not want riches. My only wish is that on one Friday nobody should light lamps in their houses. Even in the palace there should be no lamp."

Only I will light lamps in my house." The King said, "You light the house the next Friday." He made an announcement throughout the town that no one should light his house on following Friday and if he did so his eyes will be plucked out.

The youngest daughter, as soon as she got permission from the King to light her house on the following Friday, told her brother-in-laws to bring at least two *varakan** on loan and that the whole house had to be lighted the next Friday. She also asked one brother-in-law to stand near the front door and the second one to stand near the back door and told them that if anyone wanted to go in they should let him go in only on the condition that he would not come out and in case anyone wanted to go out of the house they should let him go out only on the condition that he would not come in again.

All the three brothers went out to bring some money. Both the younger brothers kept their eldest brother as a mortgage and borrowed two *varakan*. They bought oil, earthen lamps and cotton etc., to illuminate the whole house.

The long awaited Friday came. The youngest daughter along with her two sisters-in-law observed a fast that day and during the night she lit the whole house.

The whole town was in utter darkness because of the King's order. Goddess Lakshmi went from house to house but could not find a ray of light anywhere. In the end she came to the youngest daughter's house. There she saw her brother-in-law standing in front of the house. She took his permission to go in. The brother-in-law enquired who she was and let her go in

* *Varakan* - One varakan is nearly equal to three and a half rupees.

only after ascertaining from her that she will not come out.

As Goddess Lakshmi could not find light anywhere in the town she accepted his condition and entered the house. No sooner had she entered the house, than Poverty, Goddess Lakshmi's elder sister, could no longer continue in the house and had to leave the place. She quickly came out of the house and asked the brother-in-law's permission to leave the house. The brother-in-law then was reminded of his sister-in-law's words. He enquired who she was and that she should promise that if she left the house she would not enter it again, only then he would allow her to leave. She promised that she would not come back again and left the house through the back door.

The next morning when all the three brothers and their wives got up they found all the vessels, trunks, almirahs full of gold coins. Poverty had disappeared altogether and they became very rich. The youngest daughter's parents and her sisters started visiting her house thereafter.

Do you know that from that day onwards people light their houses on Friday and perform pooja to invite Goddess Lakshmi !



DO NOT BE ENVIOUS

LONG long ago a poor brahmin lived in a place called Nadapuram. Every morning he used to beg and bring rice from different houses. The wife used to cook and serve the food. Many years passed by. The wife insisted her husband to go out and learn some trade.

The husband agreed. He could manage to get a little more rice that day. The wife gave *Kattu Chadam** to her husband and asked him to learn a new trade and come back home. The husband went on foot. After walking for a long time he got very tired. He took his food and slept under the shade of a mango tree. After some time he got up and sat there enjoying the breeze. At that time a shepherd was going that way singing merrily. The brahmin called him and asked him why he was singing. The shepherd said that that was an art. The brahmin requested him to teach him that song and the shepherd taught him.

The brahmin went back home singing the song all the way. His wife came out and asked him what new trade he had learnt. The brahmin said, "I have learnt the art of singing." When his wife heard this she felt sorry and said, "Today you have come back without learning anything. Please do not repeat the samething tomorrow. Kindly go tomorrow again and learn something useful."

The next morning the wife gave some *Kattu Chadam* to her husband and sent him out to learn some new trade. The brahmin started on his journey. He started walking through thick forest. He got very tired. He hung the food packet in the branch of

* *Kattu Chadam* means rice and curd mixed together with a little salt.

a tree and slept beneath it. At that time Lord Shiva and his wife Parvati were passing that way. Goddess Parvati felt very hungry. She saw the food packet hanging in the branch of the tree. She took the food along with her husband and drank the water from a pond near by.

When Parvati finished the food she felt very bad and said to Lord Shiva, "We have finished the food which the brahmin had brought. What will he do when he gets up ?" Lord Shiva quickly made five small cups of silver and tied them in a piece of cloth and hung them in the same place. The brahmin got up, washed his hands and took out the packet containing his food. He was surprised to find five small silver cups inside it. He took them out one by one and kept them on the ground. Five handsome ladies came out from each cup and served him food. His happiness knew no bounds. He came back home and told everything to his wife.

The wife told her husband that they must invite everyone in the town and give them a grand feast. The husband gave his consent and said, "Tomorrow you get up early in the morning, clean the whole house and make *Kolam*.* Then you invite all the ladies. I shall go and invite all the men." The next morning they did as planned. All the people were surprised to know that a poor man had invited them for a feast. They did not refuse the offer. They all took food at their own place and went to his place thinking the Brahmin could only give very scanty food.

When the people saw the preparations in that house they thanked themselves that at least they had taken food before coming there. They thought that it was an Ekadashi day for them. After some time the

* *Kolam* - Rice is soaked in water and ground into a very fine paste. With the help of this paste different designs are made on the floor.

Brahmin came and asked all of them to sit on a *Pai*.* The Brahmin went inside and opened all the silver cups. No sooner had he opened them than five ladies from each cup came out and started serving food to all those present there. They served all kinds of food along with *Paisam*** and sweet dishes consisting of Ladoo, *Mysore Pak**** etc. Every one was surprised. They all had a hearty feast and went back home.

The Brahmin had a neighbour who was very rich. His wife said to him, "The next door Brahmin had brought silver cups from God. Why don't you also go and bring cups from God?" The husband agreed and went to the Brahmin and asked him the way of obtaining silver cups. He also went to the same place with food packet and hung his packet in the same place and pretended as if he was having a nice sleep and was waiting for the arrival of God and Goddess. That day also Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati were passing that way. That day also Goddess Parvati was very hungry. Both of them took the food which the man had brought.

Lord Shiva understood that the man was a rich man and that he had come there only with a bad intention. Lord Shiva then thought of teaching him a lesson. He left five silver cups and went away. When the man, who was not sleeping, woke up he saw the five cups and was very happy. Without opening them there he went home straight and thought of opening them only after inviting all the people for a feast. He invited all the men and women of the town.

* *Pai* is a kind of mat.

** *Paisam* - Rice cooked in creamy milk with sugar in it.

*** *Mysore Pak* is a sweet dish which is made with gram dal powder, ghee and sugar.

• All the people came there. The rich man made all of them sit on a *Pattu Pai*.^{*} Then he went inside and opened the packet and kept all the cups on the floor. Five barbers with knives in their hands came out from each of those cups and started shaving the heads of all those present there. They did not even spare the women. All those who had come for a hearty feast went back home bald-headed. The rich man felt very much ashamed and never opened those cups after that.



^{*} *Pattu Pai* is mat made up of a very fine fibre.

AYA KAPPAN WHO BECAME THE KING

ONCE upon a time there was a business man. He had a son named Aya Kappan. Aya Kappan lost his father when he was very young. His father had collected a large sum of money. Aya Kappan was always surrounded by a good number of friends. He spent all the hard saved money of his father among his friends. When only a little money was left his friends also started disappearing. When he saw his friends deserting him, he realized the value of money. He started spending the remaining money very economically.

The King and his minister used to go round the country to find out the welfare of the people. Once when they were thus taking their round they saw Aya Kappan. They came near him and told him that they were travellers and that they would be taking their dinner with him. Aya Kappan said, "I am glad to see both of you and would be glad to give you dinner." He asked his mother to prepare a good dinner.

The King and his minister took their dinner. After the dinner they said to Aya Kappan, "We are very happy at the hospitality shown to us. These days it is not easy to find a good man like you. If you have any wish to be fulfilled please let us know. We will try our best to carry out your wishes." Aya Kappan said, "I am very happy. If only I can become the King of this country for one day I shall punish two of my neighbours who cheated me." Both of them said, "We hope that your wish will be fulfilled."

They all started taking betels. The King put some medicine to induce unconsciousness in one of the betels and gave it to Aya Kappan. Aya Kappan fell unconscious after taking that betel. Both the King and

His minister brought him to the palace. As it was night, none saw them carrying Aya Kappan. They put Aya Kappan in the King's bed and put on all the King's dresses.

The next morning the first minister came near his bed and said, "Lord ! It is time for you to get up. All the people are waiting for you."

Aya Kappan got up and sat on his bed. He was surprised to find himself in such a decorated room. He started thinking where he was and at whose house he was. He thought that he was dreaming and he slept again. The minister again said, "Lord ! This is not the time to sleep. Many people are waiting for you. Please get up and attend to them." Aya Kappan then asked the minister, "Who are you ? What business have I with the King's work." The minister said, "Lord ! Why are you asking such a question today ? It seems you must have seen a bad dream to-night or else how can you forget this humble servant of yours who has been serving you for the last ten years." When Aya Kappan heard all this he thought how a business man's son could ever become a King. He thought probably he was dreaming, so he once again tried to sleep. But his minister went on waking him.

At the end Aya Kappan decided to get up and see for himself whether he was dreaming or not. He got up and went and sat on the throne. He heard all the people patiently and passed on orders. The King watched him secretly and felt happy.

Suddenly Aya Kappan was reminded of his neighbours. He ordered his ministers to bring those two men, shave their hair, ride them on a donkey and take them round the city. He also ordered to send 15,000 *Varakan* to his mother. The ministers carried out the orders.

Aya Kappan was then given a grand lunch in golden plates. Beautiful girls entertained him while he was thus having his food. In the evening various types of games were played. He was given a grand dinner. In the end he was given betels. Along with the betels they gave him medicine to make him unconscious. When he became unconscious they took off his dress and put on his own dress and took him to his own house.

The next morning when he got up he did not find the palace. He started calling the minister loudly. When his mother heard him shouting so loudly she came running and said, "Dear son ! Why are you shouting so loudly ? Where were you yesterday ? When did you come back ?" As Aya Kappan's house was very big so his mother could not see the King and the minister carrying his son. Aya Kappan asked his mother, "Who are you ?" His mother said, "Am I not your mother ? Why are you asking me this question?" He said, "Whose mother are you ? I am a King. How can you be my mother?" His mother said, "Do not talk such things. The King will get angry and he might punish you. You do not know his anger. Do you not know the punishment got by our neighbours because of his displeasure?" Aya Kappan then said, "Oh ! Did you see. It was only I who punished them yesterday. Why are you saying that I am not a King." His mother said, "What has happened to you ? If the King hears all this, what will happen ? It is only due to the kindness of the King that he sent 15,000 Varakan to us yesterday. Do you not know this ?" As soon as Aya Kappan heard about the money he said, "It was only I who sent the money to you. Still you do not know how to respect me. How can you be my mother?" Saying this he took a stick and started beating her. She shouted and all the neighbours came. They stopped him from beating and told him that she was his mother and that he should not beat her. He did not believe

this and went on saying that she was not his mother. The neighbours took him to a sanatorium and got him admitted there.

In the sanatorium he was given very little food and was flogged everyday. His mother visited him everyday there. Aya Kappan started analysing his past and as soon as he saw his mother he said, "My dear mother, please excuse me for all the wrongs done by me to you. I am really very sorry for what I have done. I beg your pardon." When his mother heard all this her happiness knew no bounds and went to the hospital authorities and got him released from there and took him home. Later on he was passing his days very happily.

A few days passed like this. The King and his minister were going on a round in their changed dress to know about the welfare of the people. When Aya Kappan saw them coming he hid himself behind a tree. The King approached him and asked, "Why are you hiding yourself like this? What harm have I done to you?" Aya Kappan said, "You go your own way. I do not have anything to say." The King then said, "I have come from a far off place and I am very hungry. Who else can feed me." Aya Kappan could not possibly refuse them admission into his house. He gave them food. While they were taking food the King asked, "Why did you hide yourself when you saw me?" Aya Kappan narrated everything to him and also told him of the misfortunes that occurred to him when he was in the hospital and showed him bruises on the back. The King sympathised with him and while they were busy taking the betels the King gave him a beautiful flower. As soon as Aya Kappan smelt it he became unconscious and was taken to the King's palace.

When in the morning he found himself in the palace he was surprised. The minister came to wake

him up. Then Aya Kappan said, "Who are you ? Why have you come here?" The minister said, "Sir! Probably you were dreaming, that is why you have forgotten me." Aya Kappan then said, "Go and make your way. I am not a king. I am a business man's son. Last time when I became the King I was flogged, you can see the bruises on my back." So saying he showed his back. The King who was watching all this from behind the door could not control his laughter. He came to the front and said, "So how are you getting along?" As soon as Aya Kappan heard his voice he knew that the man who visited his house twice was none but the King. He then said to the King, "Your majesty ! I am all right." He fell prostrate at the King's feet. The King then introduced him to the Queen and gave him an open invitation to visit the palace anytime he wished.

Aya Kappan used to come there every now and then. He fell in love with one maid. The Queen came to know about this and she told this to the King. The King gave that maid to him in marriage and he built a grand house for them. He gave them plenty of riches and made them stay over there. Aya Kappan spent all the money, so much so that he never even had anything to eat. He was very clever. He thought of getting some money from the King by some clever tricks. He asked his wife to spread her hair and show as if her husband had died and go to the Queen and ask for money to perform his funeral rites.

As advised by her husband the maid went to the Queen and asked for money to perform the last rites. The Queen felt sorry and gave her one thousand *Varakan** and asked her to come and stay with her.

Aya Kappan's wife went home and gave the money to her husband. Aya Kappan then spread

* One Varakan is nearly equal to three and half rupees.

his hair, put on a dirty cloth and went to the King and said, "Your Majesty ! I was having a nice time without any family worry. But you gave the maid in marriage. All of a sudden she died yesterday. The money you gave me was all spent on medicine. I do not even have money to perform the last rites." The King felt sorry and gave him one thousand *Varakan*. The King went to Queen to inform her about it.

The Queen who was deeply aggrieved by the loss of her maid's husband did not know how to break open the news to her husband. The King came and said, "Who can act against fate. Her days were numbered. Do not take it to the heart."

The queen said, "Had she been unmarried she would have lived with *tilak* on her forehead. We gave her in marriage to him and he died."

The King was taken aback and said, "Your maid died and you are talking as if Aya Kappan had died."

The Queen said, "I would have been thousand times happier had my maid been lucky enough not to have seen this widowhood. I gave her one thousand *Varakan* to perform the rites."

The King said, "It is a mystery to me. Only half an hour before Aya Kappan came and told me that his wife had died and I gave him one thousand *Varakan* and pacified him." He sent one man to Aya Kappan's place to know about the truth.

As soon as Aya Kappan saw the man he made his wife lie down in bed and started weeping. The man saw Aya Kappan and told the King that his wife had died and he was lamenting. When the Queen heard this she was surprised and sent one of her maids

to find out the truth. When Aya Kappan saw the maid approaching, he lay down on the bed and his wife started lamenting like her husband. The maid saw this and reported to the King that Aya Kappan had died.

The King and Queen went to his place to verify the truth. As soon as Aya Kappan saw them both he and his wife lay down and pretended as if they had died. When both of them came near, the King said to the Queen, "First the wife died and the husband died later." The Queen then said, "No, that is not the case. When the husband died, the wife could not possibly bear the grief so she also died." They started arguing. In the end the King said, "Who so ever tells me the truth, will be given a village as a reward." Hearing this Aya Kappan got up and fell on the feet of the King and said, "Your majesty I died first."

The maid suddenly got up and fell on the feet of the Queen and said, "Madam ! I died first."

The King and the Queen were puzzled. Aya Kappan then said, "Your majesty ! Please excuse me for the trick that I played. Sheer poverty forced me to act like this." The King was very happy at the truthfulness of Aya Kappan and gave him a village and also riches. They lived happily thereafter.



ONCE upon a time a potter performed the marriage ceremony of his son. He was full of ambitions. On the marriage night he thought of taking the newly wedded couple around the city on an elephant's back. In South India, on the marriage day after all the religious functions are over the bride and bridegroom are taken round the city in a procession usually in a car or on foot with the accompaniment of the *Nadasuram* or *Kottumelam*. *Nadasuram* or *Kottumelam* means a song accompanied by beating of drums, ringing of bells with the help of 'Kinnaram' and *Shahnai* with the help of *Melam*. Kinnaram consists of two bell shaped metals which when struck produce a rhythmical sound. *Shahnai* is a well known musical instrument of flute category. *Melam* is a tabla which is beaten by hand in keeping with the rhythm.



A Mohammedan had an elephant in that city. The potter went to borrow the elephant for one day. The Mohammedan agreed and gave him the elephant.

That night a grand procession with the bride and bridegroom was taken around the city. There were many men, women and children in that procession and they were all walking slowly hearing the sweet sound of the *Nadasuram*. Suddenly for some reason or the other the elephant fell down and collapsed. The potter felt very sorry and went to the Mohammedan and said, "Your elephant died all of a sudden. I shall pay you the price for the elephant or I shall get you another elephant." The Mohammedan was very obstinate. He did not agree with the potter and said, "I will not accept anything else from you in place of my elephant. I want my own elephant. Give back my elephant to me," so saying he went to the court and lodged a complaint against the potter.

The judge enquired of the potter as to what the matter was. The potter said, "Your majesty, his elephant, which I borrowed from him, died suddenly on the way while the bride and bridegroom were going round the city. I did not kill the elephant intentionally I am ready to pay its price or I can get him another elephant. Kindly make him agree to my proposals."

The judge said to the Mohammedan, "As your elephant died suddenly you accept either its price or another elephant in its place." But the Mohammedan did not listen to the judge and went on saying that he wanted his elephant back. The judge postponed the hearing of the case for the next morning. He called the potter aside and said, "You need not come to the court tomorrow. You do not bolt your front door but close it and keep all the pots near the door. As soon as the Mohammedan comes here tomorrow I shall ask him to go to your place and bring you here.

He will rush to your house and open the door in a hurry. All the pots will break. You start shouting, howling and collect the neighbours and keep on saying, "My lord ! He has broken all my pots which were used by my forefathers." He will console you but do not listen to him and start shouting louder and say that you want the same old pots. Then you come and report to me." The judge after telling him all this sent him away.

The next morning the Mohammedan reached the court. The potter had not come. The judge asked him to go and call the potter from his place. Everything happened as planned before. The potter went to the court and said to the judge, "I want the same old pots which my ancestors were using." The judge then asked the Mohammedan, "What have you to say to this ?" The Mohammedan said, "The loss of my elephant to me and the loss of his earthen pots to him are on the same level." The potter and the Mohammedan went back home. The potter paid up the price of the elephant and the Mohammedan the price of the pots.



AN INTELLIGENT WIFE

IN days of yore there was a peasant named Velayudhan at Thondeman in South India. He was a great miser. He had plenty of land but to save money he would not engage anyone for ploughing his field. He became poorer day by day and yet he would not change.

One day a *Sanyasi* came to the town. The *Sanyasi* was quite well-known having gained name and fame. Velayudhan thought of inviting him for food to his place and telling him all about himself and seeking his advice. He invited him and asked his wife to prepare good tasty food. The *Sanyasi* accepted his invitation.

After the food both the *Sanyasi* and the peasant started talking. On being asked by the *Sanyasi* about his welfare Velayudhan said, "Lord ! I have plenty of land in different parts of the city. I have not engaged anybody to till the land because I do not trust anybody and I do not want to pay them. Kindly advise me as to what I should do in this case."

The *Sanyasi* came to know about his greed. He told Velayudhan that he knew one *mantra* and on chanting the *mantra* for three months a spirit will come to him and do any type of work assigned to him. Velayudhan requested the *Sanyasi* to teach him the *mantra* and chanted the *mantra* for three months continuously. At the end of three months he saw a spirit as big as a mountain standing in front of him and asking him why he had thought of him. Velayudhan then told him that he was in need of a man who could do his work efficiently and explained to him the type of work that he was supposed to do. The spirit agreed to act according to his advice but told

him of his condition that in case he failed to keep him engaged he would eat him up.

Velayudhan showed the spirit the land that had to be ploughed and the canal that had to be built and returned home thinking that the spirit would at least take three months to complete the task.

Velayudhan and his wife had a hearty lunch and they were taking betel. At that time the spirit came and told him that he had finished the work and if it was not satisfactory he would do the work again.

Velayudhan then went there and saw the work done. He was surprised to find the work so perfectly done. He returned home alongwith the spirit and promised him to give some other work. He then came to his wife and told her that she was not fortunate enough to have her *Tali** any more. He repented for having learnt the *mantra* and inviting the spirit. His wife pacified him and told him to get all the work done by the spirit and after everything is over she would assign him some work and would take care of him.

Velayudhan had land in twenty-five different countries. The spirit finished all the work in no time. Velayudhan then told him that he had no other work to assign to him and that his wife would be too glad to get one or two small jobs done by him.

The spirit then came near Velayudhan's wife and requested her to assign the work to him. She quickly clipped one long hair and giving it to him asked him to straighten it. The spirit went and sat over the

* *Tali* is the sacred yellow thread with one or two thin flat rectangular golden plates. This thread is tied round the bride's neck by the bridegroom in an auspicious time. This is the sign of marriage and the girl wears it till her husband is alive.

tree and started straightening. However hard he tried he could not succeed. Finally he went to a goldsmith's shop and put the hair in the furnace with a view to straighten it. But it burnt away.

The spirit felt ashamed to face the lady without doing the assigned work. So he went and hid himself in the forest.

Velayudhan and his wife waited for a few days and not seeing the spirit again felt very happy and spent the rest of the days peacefully. The intelligence of the wife scared away the spirit and solved the problem.



THE GREEDY MAN AND HIS TEACHER

ONCE upon a time there lived a peasant at Coimbatore. He was very greedy. He was all the time thinking of making more and more money. Alongwith his wife and children he went and stayed in a small place far away from the hum drum of the city. Do you know why ? Lest anyone might come to beg or borrow money from him.

They were thus passing away their time when Chitta Yogi, the peasant's family *guru* came to his place to collect *dakshina* (honorary paid to a Brahmin). The peasant was very much upset. He thought that he must make some excuse and face the situation. He quickly went inside the house and put on a new dress and came out and greeted the *guru* and told him that he was in a great hurry. But the *guru* would not leave him. He followed him. On his way the peasant asked the *guru* as to which Monday that was. The *guru* told him that that was *Aipashi* Monday. *Aipashi* is the month corresponding to *Kwar*. The peasant then counted something on his fingers and said, "Sir ! If you come on the fifth Monday after this in the month of *Mashi* (*Mashi* is the month corresponding to *Magh*) I shall be able to give you the *dakshina*. Now I am not in a position to give you the money. Please bless me so that I am in a position to give the donation next time." The *guru* took leave and went away. The peasant came back home and told everything to his wife. He felt very happy that he could ward off the *Guru* at least for some time.

Some months passed away. One day it rained very heavily in the month of *Mashi*. The next morning the peasant took his implements and started towards the field. Suddenly he struck his head against the terrace. Any such accident is commonly taken as

a superstition. His wife prevented him from going out and said that some misfortune might fall on him as his head had struck against the terrace. She asked him to wait for some time and then go. The peasant then thought of all the possible misfortunes that might befall on him that day. He thought of his *guru*. He said to his wife, "The greatest misfortune that can fall on me is that today being Mashi Monday our guru might come for *Guru Dakshina*. Do not be afraid of him at all. I have thought of a plan and if you act according to my advice we can get rid of the danger. Before our guru comes to our house you take out your *Tali** and hide it inside the *Kudam*** and as soon as he enters, ask all our children to fall on his feet. You start weeping and inform him about my death. He will then go away. We will then have a peaceful time." The peasant then took leave and went to the field.

The *Guru* came to the peasant's house after sometime. The peasant's wife, on seeing the guru from a distance quickly took out her *Tali* and hid it inside the *Kudam*. When the *Guru* came she made all her children fall down on his feet and she started weeping bitterly saying that her husband had passed away five days back leaving all of them without any support. The *Guru* took everything to be true and thought of staying there for finishing all the rites and getting whatever was available from them. He pacified the peasant's wife and asked her to make all the preparations for performing the death rites and told her that he would be helping her in that.

The peasant returned home in the evening. He heard his *guru* talking inside the house. He

* *Tali* is the sacred yellow thread with one or two thin flat rectangular golden plates. This thread is tied round the bride's neck by the bridegroom in an auspicious time. This is the sign of marriage and the girl wears it till her husband is alive.

** *Kudam* is a vessel for carrying water.

cursed him and thought of spending some more time sitting on the tamarind tree at the back of their house and watching everything that was going on in the house.

The guru came under the same tamarind tree for performing the rites. Sitting under the tree the guru started counting the day on which his disciple had died and found that he died on a very bad day. He looked up at the sky to guess the time. Suddenly he saw his disciple on the tree. He took him to be his ghost and was very much terrified. He did not know what to do. The peasant thought of taking hold of the opportunity and terrifying his guru more. He quickly jumped right in front of the guru. The guru was half dead with fear. But he somehow gathered a little courage. He stood up and started running homewards. The peasant chased him and shouted that if he saw him again he would tear him into pieces. The guru ran faster and went very far away. The peasant returned home and told his wife all that had happened. He felt very happy for having saved his money.

13

THE DEAF, THE BLIND AND THE DONKEY

ONCE two persons, a deaf man and a blind man became great friends. One day both of them were on an outing when they noticed a donkey and a tub full of clothes. The washerman was not seen nearby. The deaf told the blind that if they carried the tub and the clothes with them they might prove useful to them sometime. The blind man agreed and he carried the tub on his head. The deaf drove the donkey. While they were thus going their way the deaf saw some ants which were unusually big. He told his friend about them and took some ants in his snuff box and both of them again continued their walk. Suddenly there came a big storm accompanied by lightning. The two friends were terrified and decided to take shelter in a safe place.

Both of them found a big palace that belonged to a demon. The demon had gone out at that time. The two friends entered the palace, bolted the door, turned inside and thought of spending the night there. After some time the demon returned and saw the door bolted. He was surprised. He knocked the door with full force. But the friends terrified the demon with the help of the donkey and the tub and did not open the door. They made the donkey bray by putting some ants in his ears. They showed the outer portion of the tub. The demon out of fright left the place and hid himself in the jungle. Both of them spent the night there.

Early in the morning the deaf woke up the blind and told him that the house was full of gold, silver and diamond. The blind man requested his friend to show him the riches and with his help tied all the valuables in four bundles. They kept two bundles

on the back of the donkey and carried the other two bundles in their own hands.

The demon, who had not gone far away, was hiding himself in a bush nearby and watched the deaf and the blind leaving the house. He thought of killing both of them and their donkey and taking back his valuables from them. He gathered six more demons and followed them closely.

The deaf man saw them. He was very much afraid. He could not possibly walk out of fright. But the blind man who could not see the demons was walking very boldly. He felt his friend was lagging behind and asked as to why he was walking so slowly. He asked the deaf man to walk faster and keep pace with him. The deaf told him that six demons were following them very closely. The blind man told him to throw away the riches and hide the donkey in a ditch and climb a tall tree. Both of them then climbed the tree.

The demons approached them fast. When they saw both of them on the tree they thought of a plan. As they were incapable of climbing the tree one demon stood near the tree and the second one quickly jumped and stood over his shoulder. The third one stood on the second one's shoulder and so on. When the deaf man saw this going on he became very nervous. He told his friend about it and just pushed him aside. The blind man fell on the shoulder of the seventh demon. He thought that he had fallen down on another branch. He quickly caught hold of the demon's ears thinking them to be the branches of the tree. The demon could not make out what was on his back. He took him to be a ghost. He quickly wiped his back and jumped from there. No sooner had he jumped than all the other demons thought that there was some danger. So they all jumped and fled away from there.

The deaf person who was watching all this, sitting on the branch of the tree, came down after they had gone to a considerable distance. He hugged his friend and told him all that had happened and took his bundles along with the donkey from the ditch and reached home.

Both of them thought of distributing the riches between themselves. The deaf thought that even if he did not distribute all the riches and hid some for himself, the blind man would not know about it. He hid his bundle and the bundles from the back of the donkey and took the blind man's bundle and distributed that only. The deaf also asked the blind to feel his share. The blind man felt his and his friend's share and came to realise that the deaf had cheated him. He told him that there were four bundles and that his share of the riches was very very small and that he was being cheated. The deaf denied the charge. The blind man said, "My dear friend ! You are under the impression that you can cheat me just because I am blind. I may tell you that I have not lost my wits. You have distributed the riches of only one bundle and you have hidden the other three bundles. This is not proper. You should not cheat me in this way." When the deaf heard this he explained that he had not done such a thing. Both of them started quarrelling. In anger the blind gave a big blow on his nose. The deaf fell unconscious and when he regained consciousness he found that he was no more deaf. He got up in anger and gave a similar blow on the face of his friend. His friend fell down and after sometime when he got up he found that he had got back his eye-sight.

The deaf felt sorry for having cheated his good friend. He brought all the bundles and distributed the riches again. Both of them took their bundles and reached home. They gave a big sum as charity and lived very happily thereafter.

CHUDAMANI'S COT

ONCE upon a time there was a business man named Vasant Tilakan. He had only one son named Chudamani. He was loved immensely by his parents. His parents never allowed him to do any kind of work. He played the whole day and never learnt anything. His parents never thought of his future.

The boy's marriage was performed in a grand way. His parents died after a few years. Until that time Chudamani had not started doing any kind of work. He was passing his days with the money saved by his parents. There is a Tamil saying that even the mountain will vanish if eaten without doing anything. The money saved was fast disappearing.

Chudamani was never worried but his wife was anxious over the future.

One day she was very sad. Chudamani asked her the reason. She said, "We have nearly spent all the savings. You do not know any trade. You cannot do any business. How are we going to make both ends meet ? This is what worries me a lot." Chudamani pacified her by saying, "Don't be worried. Trust in God. The planter of the trees will water the plants."

Next day he woke up early in the morning, took a sickle in his hand and said to his wife, "I am going out for work. Give me some food to eat during the day." She wondered what work her husband would do, but without saying anything she gave him some good food.

He entered a thick forest. He started asking each and every tree, "May I cut you ?" Does a tree

ever speak ? He returned home empty handed. His wife never asked him what he did and where he went. He also did not tell his wife what actually happened.

The next day also he asked for a food packet from his wife and entered another forest. He started asking each and every tree, "May I cut you ?" As he never got any reply, he ate his food and returned home in the evening.

The third day he went to another forest. He started asking each and every tree, "May I cut you ?" But he did not get any reply. So with a heavy heart he returned home.

Even after all this Chudamani had not lost patience. He wanted to fulfil the task he had undertaken. He started in a different direction the next morning. The whole day he went on asking all the trees in the forest. "May I cut you ?" But not a single tree replied. In the evening while he was just going to return he asked a big mango tree, "May I cut you ?" The mango tree said, "Yes, by all means you can cut me." You may ask, "Does a tree ever speak ?" In fact when God saw his faithfulness and innocence, He entered that tree and spoke from behind. Chudamani was overjoyed to hear this. Even though he never learnt any art but he was good at making cots. As he could not get any wood required for the purpose he was roaming in the forest. When the mango tree allowed him to cut it he cut the tree and took it home. When his wife saw him carrying a big log of wood she did not ask him anything but she went on pondering over as to what her husband would be doing with that log of wood.

The next day Chudamani got up early in the morning. He kept that log of wood in one of the rooms. He called his wife and said, "From now onwards

for seven days I will not come out of this room. You also should not enter this room. Till that time you must keep my food inside this room through this window and you should not talk to me till I call you. I also will not talk to you." Saying this he locked himself up in that room. His wife was surprised and thought what her husband was going to do for seven days shutting himself up in that room.

Seven days passed by. He made a beautiful cot out of that log of wood. He called his wife and showed her the cot. She was surprised to see such a beautiful cot. She praised him for his ingenious act.

After resting the whole day he went to the King's palace with the cot the next day and sat in front of the palace. All the King's men were surprised to see such a beautiful cot. They came near Chudamani and started asking him, "Is it your cot ? Is it for sale ? Who made it ?" They asked him many such questions.

"I will not tell you anything. If the King comes and asks me these questions I will tell him everything," said Chudamani. Hearing this the King's men went and told the King. The King ordered his men to bring Chudamani inside the palace.

The King's men came running to Chudamani and said, "The King has ordered you to come inside the palace." Immediately he went with his cot and stood in front of the King. The King asked him, "Is this cot for sale ?" Chudamani said, "Yes, your majesty. It is for sale." The King then asked, "Who made this beautiful Cot ?" "I made it," said Chudamani.

The King was surprised to hear it and said, "All right. I will buy this cot. What is its price ?" "One thousand rupees," said Chudamani. The King was bewildered and said, "What ! One thousand

rupees ! No one has so far heard a cot costing such a lot." Chudamani said with humility, "That I do not know. If you want you may buy, if not, there is no compulsion." The King thought there must be something strange about the cot. He bought it for one thousand rupees.

When Chudamani was thus taking leave and going home with one thousand rupees he looked at the King and said, "Your majesty ! I may tell you something. Please listen to me carefully. When you lie on this cot for the first night please do not sleep. Keep open your eyes and see what happens." Saying this he went home.

His wife was very happy to see her husband bringing such a lot of money.

When night approached the King stretched himself on the cot but kept himself wide awake. He was eager to know the secrets. When the clock struck ten, one leg of the cot called the other three legs and said, "Friends, now I am going round this Kingdom. All of you must take good care of the King and see that he does not fall down." The three legs bade him farewell and asked him to return soon.

The King could clearly see the leg going out of the room. The leg of the cot entered a thick forest. There it saw two serpents quarrelling. One was saying, "I will go and bite the King." The other was saying, "No, it is not possible for you. I will go and bite him first." Then the first said, "I will go in his shoes and bite him when he puts them on."

Hearing this the leg returned to the palace. The other three legs asked him, "What is the news?" The leg narrated the whole conversation that took place between the two serpents and said, "If the King cleans his shoes before putting them on in the morning then the serpent will fall down and that will prove me true."

* The second leg got ready for its journey and said, "I am going round the country. Please take care of the King." The other legs requested him to return soon and bade him good-bye.

The second leg went into another forest. There it saw a beautiful palace, where the King used to go and stay in summer. As the leg was passing near the palace it heard a prophecy.

It said, "This palace has become very old. Now any time the King comes and stays here, the palace will crash and fall on his head. That will bring his end." The leg of the cot felt sorry for the King and returned home.

It gave out what it had heard in the forest. The King who was wide awake heard everything and it was a fact because the King never bothered to repair it after building the palace once.

The third leg took leave and started on its journey. It came across a thick forest. It saw a holy man there. Near his hut there was a "*Dharam-sala*". An army officer's wife was putting up there. The officer had gone out to another country for the last one year. His wife used to go to the holy man's hut everyday and she fell in love with him. After some time the army officer returned home. That night his wife reached the hut a little late. The holy man asked her the reason for coming late. She told him that her husband had come back after a year so she was delayed and that she should be excused. The holy man said, "All right. Now please let me know whom you love more, your husband or me." The wicked girl said, "Definitely you, Sir." The holy man said, "If that is so, just now you go and bring your husband's head." Hearing this she cut her husband's head and brought it. When the holy man saw it his anger knew no bounds. He said, "You

treacherous girl ! You may do any heinous act. You have murdered your own husband. Go away and do not stand before me.

Instead of feeling sorry for what she had done she kept the head near the body and started lamenting and saying, "Thieves have murdered my husband." The third leg returned and narrated the whole incident to his other associates.

The fourth leg took its turn and left the palace. When it reached the forest it saw seven dacoits. They had looted the King's palace and had kept the valuables to be distributed among themselves. They had also brought the sleeping princess alongwith her cot. She was still fast asleep. When the fourth leg saw this it went back running and narrated the incident. The King on hearing this went with his men towards the north of the palace. Before putting on his shoes he cleaned them. The serpent fell down from the shoes thereby proving the first leg's statement. When the King reached the spot alongwith his men he saw his daughter and his riches. The dacoits ran away on seeing so many men. Everything was brought back to the palace. This proved the fourth leg's story.

The King now ordered his servants to demolish his summer palace. But before they started demolishing it fell down. His servants had a narrow escape. The second leg's statement was also proved true.

The next day when the King was in the court, a few men from the '*Dharamsala*' came with the army officer's dead body and said that thieves had murdered him. The king ordered that the army officer's wife should be brought. When she came, he asked her, "Who murdered your husband?" She said, "Thieves have murdered him." Since the incidents narrated by the other three legs came out true, the King believed the story narrated by the third leg.

He ordered a fire to be made in the forest and kept her in the midst of the fire and he performed the funeral service of the army officer.

The King then invited Chudamani to his palace and narrated everything to him. The King was so pleased with Chudamani that he said to him, "Tomorrow the whole day you may bring any number of carts and fill them up with costly jewels, gold and silver." Chudamani was much pleased and he filled his house with all valuable articles. Therafter Chudamani and his wife lived happily together.

The legs of the cot went on giving different news to the King. This was because of the large-heartedness of that mango tree with which the cot was made.



THE MATCH BOX

ONCE upon a time there was a King. The King had no children. He did all kinds of *pooja* and used to go to the temple everyday. After a long time he was blessed with a daughter. The astrologers predicted that the King's daughter would marry a soldier at the age of eighteen. The King did not like to give his daughter in marriage to a soldier. He kept her in an isolated palace with all the guards around the palace.

Once a soldier entered that town. He was in his uniform and was moving around the town brandishing his sword and singing songs of valour.

One old lady on seeing him said, "If only you had that bag full of gold it would have looked graceful." The soldier said, "Where can money be got?" The old lady said, "If you listen to me carefully I shall let you know the ways of earning money." The soldier agreed and listened to her carefully. She said, "There is one banyan tree outside the precincts of this country. Go near it. There is one hole in it. Get into that hole and go inside. You will find a very beautiful palace. There will be a big verandah inside the palace. In that verandah you will find a dog with eyes as big as lemons standing over a wooden box. As soon as the dog sees you it will start barking and come to bite you. At that time you cover his face with the cloth I am giving you. It will not do any harm to you. Put him down from the box and open it. The box will have plenty of riches. Collect as much as you want and then place the dog in the same position. Then you go ahead. You will come across another big verandah. There also you will find another dog with eyes as big as peaches, waiting over a wooden box. You put the cloth as

before over his face and put him on the floor and open the box and take as much riches as you like. Then again you go ahead. Again you will come across another big varandah. There, over a wooden box you will find a dog with eyes as big as oranges. Do not be afraid of it. You put the cloth over his face and putting him down take as much riches as you can possibly carry. While you are coming back you will find a match box near a mango tree. Bring it and give that to me. Lest you should lose your way you tie this rope around your waist and I shall catch the other end."

The soldier heard everything very patiently, tied one end of the rope round his waist and the other end he gave to the old lady. He also took the cloth which the old lady had given him and went inside the palace. He put down the dog covering its face with cloth and opened the box. The box was full of copper coins. He filled his bag with them and went forward. There he found another box and the dog with eyes as big as peaches. He repeated the same process and opened the box. The box was full of silver coins. He emptied his bag full of copper coins there and filled it up with silver coins and went ahead. He came across the third box. He opened that box and found it full of gold coins. He again emptied his bag full of silver coins and filled it up with gold coins and returned. When the old lady saw him she asked him about the match box. He said, "I forgot to bring it." So saying he went down again and brought the match box. She asked for the match box. But he did not give that to her and asked about its usefulness. The old lady refused to explain it. He cut the old lady's throat with his sword and went away.

The soldier spent his life very happily for some time. He spent almost all the money he had brought. One night when he was very hungry he started searching each and every corner of the house to find out

whether he had any coin. He took the match box and rubbed its head. The stick burnt but quickly it went off. A lemon eyed dog came in front of him and bowed and said, "Your majesty ! The servant is waiting to carry out your orders." The soldier was very happy and said, "I am very hungry. Go and bring something to eat." The dog disappeared and appeared again with a bagful of copper coins. When the soldier saw the coins he said, "Oh ! You should have brought gold coins." The dog then said, "I am incharge of copper coins only. If you want silver coins you must rub two match sticks and if you want gold coins you must rub three match sticks." The soldier then bade the dog go away.

Days passed by. He came to know that the princess was very handsome and that the astrologer had predicted that she would marry a soldier. He wanted to see her. One night he rubbed three match sticks. Suddenly a dog with eyes as big as oranges came in front of him and said, "Your majesty the servant is waiting for the orders to be carried out." The soldier said, "I have heard that the princess is very handsome. You go and bring her here." The dog quickly went to the palace and brought the sleeping princess. The soldier saw her and ordered the dog to take her back to her palace. The dog did as he was ordered.

The next morning the princess narrated everything to her mother. But her mother said, "You might have dreamt at night." Then she ordered the maid servants to keep a watch over her during the night.

The next night also the soldier did the same thing. The dog went and brought the princess. One of the maid servants saw this and she followed the dog and put a mark on the house where the dog had gone with the princess. When the dog came to know about

the mark it made the same kind of mark on all the houses in that row. The next morning when the maid servant brought the King to show him the house, she could not find the house that she had marked as all the houses had the same marks.

The third day the princess's mother tied a bag full of flour with a hole at the bottom round her waist. When the dog carried her it looked behind to see whether anyone was following it but could not see the flour falling on the road. The King's men caught hold of the soldier and brought him before the King. The King sentenced him to death.

The King's men were ready to hang him. Suddenly the soldier said, "Your majesty ! I have got the dirty habit of smoking. I have not smoked since morning. Kindly allow me to smoke and then you can hang me."

The King said, "You may smoke". The soldier then rubbed three match sticks one by one. Three dogs appeared and bit the men ready to hang him. Then it started biting all the men who had gathered there to witness the scene. The dogs then turned towards the King and his men. The King was terrified and said, "Please do not turn them towards me. I will give my daughter to you in marriage." The soldier heard this and put the cloth over the dogs. The dogs disappeared. The King then performed his daughter's marriage in a grand way. The soldier and his wife lived happily and peacefully for a long time.



KURNOOL SOMANATHAN

IN olden days there was a man named Somanathan in Kurnool. He was very poor. Is there any dearth of children in a poor man's house? He had twelve children. He could not feed them properly. Both Somanathan and his wife were very sad.

Somanathan got very angry with his fate and started cursing his lot. He thought, "How cruel God is ! There is a Tamil saying that the planter of the trees will water the plants. God has given me so many children but he has not given me riches. How am I going to rear them up ?" Thinking this he decided to go in search of his fate.

While he was passing through a deep forest he saw a camel roaming with two heavy bags full of gold coins. The camel belonged to the King. The King's servants were carrying many camels with bags full of gold coins from one country to another. They were halting at different places. One night when they were thus staying in a place they forgot to take this camel alongwith them. Since that time the camel was moving about with the heavy load on his back. The bags of gold were tied to the camel's back in such a way that it was not possible for the camel to drop them on the ground. For twelve long years the camel had been moving with the load on its back in the forest.

When the camel saw Somanathan passing that way he said to him, "Sir ? Will you please let me know where you are going." Somanathan told him about his poverty and said that he was going in search of his fate and was going to ask fate the reason of his

being poor. The camel said, "Sir, as you are going there, will you please do me a favour ? For the last twelve years I am unable to sit, eat and sleep. Will you please ask fate what is the reason of my misery ?" Somanathan said politely, "I will do the needful." He took leave and went his way.

While he was thus going he came across a river. He was standing by the side of the river. At that time a crocodile came and took him on his back and helped him cross the river. Somanathan was very happy. The crocodile then asked Somanathan, "Sir, where are you going ?" Somanathan said, "I am very poor. I am going to meet my fate and ask him the reason of my being a poor man. I will also collect riches and come back." The crocodile said, "Sir, for the last twelve years I am suffering from stomach ache. Will you kindly ask fate the reason of my stomach ache ?" Somanathan told him that he will try to get an answer. So saying he went away.

From there he went to a far off place. On his way he met a tiger. The tiger was not in a position to walk because a thorn had pricked one of his feet. The tiger was in intense pain and agony for the last twelve years. As he was not fit enough to walk he could not get enough to eat. The tiger saw Somanathan passing that way. The tiger asked Somanathan, "Sir ! Where are you going ?" Somanathan told him that he was in search of his fate and gave him the reason of his search. Somanathan further said, "My fate is living in a very far off place. It will take twelve long years to reach that place. My fate is having a nice sleep there. I have to beat him with a stick till he gets up. This has been explained to me by an old man. I am going to act according to the old man." The tiger then said, "As I am undergoing an intense pain in my leg due to the thorn kindly ask fate the way of getting rid of the thorn." Somanathan agreed and resumed his journey.

Finally, after twelve long years he reached a place where he found the fate of all the persons. *The fates were in the form of stones.* A few were standing and a few were snoring heavily. When Somanathan saw them it did not take him a long time to discover the stone of his own fate. His fate was fast asleep. He took a big stick and started beating the stone of his fate. When even after a long time the fate did not get up he stopped beating it.

The Goddess of Kindness came and woke up his fate. As soon as his fate got up he asked Somanathan, "Why did you beat me for such a long time ? What harm have I done to you ?" Somanathan on hearing this said, "Don't you know the harm done to me by you ? You are sleeping in such a way as if you are going to compete with Kumbhakaran in his sleep. You are not aware of the hardships that I am undergoing. In order to explain everything to you I woke you up by beating." The fate replied, "All right. Now you go home. You will live happily. You will not have to face any hardship."

Somanathan was very glad to hear this. Then he said, "On my way I met one camel. For the last twelve years the camel could not move, eat or sleep because it has two bags full of gold coins on its back. The camel has requested me to ask you the way of getting rid of the burden." The fate said, "You take both the bags and then the camel will be free."

Somanathan again stood there and said, "While I was crossing a river to reach this place I met a crocodile. The crocodile is having stomach ache for the last twelve years. The crocodile has asked me to know the reason of its stomach ache and the treatment." Then the fate said, "The crocodile has a big diamond as much as the size of your head in his stomach. Ask him to vomit it out. The stomach ache will go".

Somanathan did not leave fate even then. He said, "For the last twelve years a big tiger is undergoing severe pain because a thorn has pricked him in one of his feet. The tiger is eager to know the way of taking out the thorn." The fate then said, "If you are ready to pull out the thorn with your teeth it will come out." Somanathan thanked the fate and went away. The Goddess again appeared and changed the fate into a stone.

Somanathan after getting all the questions answered started homewards. He went near the tiger and asked him to show his feet and pulled out its thorn by his teeth. The tiger was very much relieved and was very happy. The tiger, who had eaten many kings in the past, had collected their riches. He took Somanathan to his den and gave him a bagful of gold and silver coins. Somanathan thanked him and took leave.

Somanathan then reached the same river. The crocodile came out and helped him in crossing the river and asked him, "Did you ask fate the reason of my stomach ache?" Somanathan said, "You have a very big diamond in your stomach. You vomit it out. Your stomach ache will vanish." The crocodile did likewise and the stomach ache disappeared. The crocodile gave the rare diamond to Somanathan. Somanathan thanked him for the diamond and resumed his journey.

He met the camel there. He called the camel and took out the bags from its back. The camel was very glad and gave him both the bags as a token of love and also told Somanathan to get on to his back so that he could take him home. Somanathan thus reached home. The camel then took leave and ran back to the forest.

When his wife and children saw Somanathan, their happiness knew no bounds. They started asking

him many questions. Somanathan patiently narrated the whole story from the beginning to the end. They were all very happy. Somanathan then built a fine house and lived very happily.

One gentleman named Raghvan who was living in the next lane was also very poor. When he saw Somanathan becoming so rich he felt very jealous and came to him and asked him, "From where did you get all the riches ?" Somanathan said, "Very far away on the eastern side of this house there is a big river. I went there and from the centre of the river I took out a 'Kodam' (Kodam is a pitcher-like vessel used mainly for carrying water and made of brass or copper) of water. The whole water turned into gold. I brought it here."

The jealous Raghavan went straight to that river and started taking out water from the centre of the river and splashing it out. Even after splashing the water for a long time he did not get even an iota of gold. The level of water started coming down. The King of crocodiles came up and said, "Sir, please do not splash water like this ? Where will the fish go ? How will they live ?" Raghavan then said, "I came here with the idea of collecting riches. Since I have not been able to get anything so far I am going to see the bottom of the river for that I have to splash some more water." The King of crocodiles said, "If that is so, please stop splashing the water I shall give you riches." He stopped. Suddenly a tide came and it brought with it many precious stones. Raghavan collected them and returned home.

Because Raghavan was very greedy he again went to the same river and started splashing the water. The next morning, the King of crocodiles got very angry and thought of teaching him a lesson. He caught hold of Raghavan and swallowed him.

For four days Raghavan was in crocodile's stomach. On the fifth day the crocodile said to him, "I think this is a just punishment for you. Do not leak out this secret. If you do then you will die at that very moment." Raghavan agreed to his condition. The crocodile then vomitted him out.

Raghavan then ran back home. But on his way home whom so ever he met, he narrated the whole story to them. As soon as he reached home he told the whole story to his wife and children. No sooner had he finished his story than he felt giddy and started vomitting blood and died soon after.

Raghavan lost his life due to the disobedience of crocodile's words. Somanathan minted money by obeying what his fate told him to do.



TRANSFER TO A NEW HOUSE

ONCE upon a time there was a rich landlord. On both sides of his house there were two tenants. Both of them were goldsmiths. The whole day they were busy beating gold and making ornaments. The landlord who was fed up with the noise thought of clearing them from his house.

He called one of them and said, "If you vacate this house I shall give you one hundred rupees. What do you say ?" He said, "All right, you give me one hundred rupees, I shall vacate the house tomorrow." The landlord called his second tenant and told him the same thing. He also readily agreed and took the money from him.

The landlord could not hear the noise the next day. He had a peaceful day. Again on the day following he heard the same beating noise. He called both of them and asked, "What ? Have you not shifted your house even now ?" They said, "Yes, we both shifted yesterday. He shifted to my house and I occupied his house." Hearing this the landlord could not decide whether to laugh or to weep.

The landlord thus lost two hundred rupees due to his folly.



HOW A BAD DAUGHTER-IN-LAW WAS
PUNISHED

IN a very small village named Muyata-Poyayi there lived a couple. The wife was very domineering and the poor husband had to carry out her wishes even if unjust. Both the wife's mother and the husband's mother were staying with them.

The wife was rather mean about her mother-in-law and made her do all household work. She was very old. She was not in a position to do the work. But she had to do it; otherwise she was not given the "*Kanji*". *Kanji* is water drained out of the cooked rice. In South India the poor people take *Kanji* alongwith a pinch of salt.

By and by the mother-in-law became so old that it was not possible for her to move from one place to another. The daughter-in-law thought of a wicked plan. She ordered her husband, "You take your mother to the forest and leave her there. Then only you will be able to live in this house peacefully."

The husband had no other option but to agree.

The next morning both the mother and son started on their journey. The daughter-in-law was very happy. She gave one packet of *Kattu Chadam* to her husband and one to her mother-in-law. *Kattu Chadam* means rice and curd mixed with a little salt to add to the taste. Her mother-in-law's packet contained soft soil in place of curd and rice.

Both the son and mother crossed the boundaries of Muyata-Poyayi. They were passing through a thick forest. They came across a small stream. They sat near it. They were very tired so they rested there for

some time. As the mother was very tired she slept. The son got up and saw her mother fast asleep. He took his lunch packet and reached home.

The mother got up after some time and found her son missing. She started calling for her son but it was of nouse. Herson had already left. She started weeping.

At that time the Goddess of the forest came there to play in the stream of water. She saw her lamenting. She asked, "Mother ! Why are you weeping?" The mother then said, "My son and I were going to another country. We were passing this way. As we were very tired so we rested here for a little while. I got up and I did not find my son," so saying she started weeping.

The Goddess of forest said, "Mother you do not worry. I shall help you. What have you got in that packet." The old lady said, "That is nothing but a packet of curd and rice." The Goddess of forest opened the packet and both of them ate. The packet contained rice in place of soft soil because her son had wrongly taken away her packet containing soft soil. The Goddess of forest asked her details of her life. The old lady told her everything about her daughter-in-law's behaviour towards her. The Goddess of forest pitied her and she said, "I will transform you into a young and strong woman. You may go home. Your son will love you. Your daughter-in-law also seeing you having more strength will change her attitude towards you and will start respecting you." So saying the Goddess changed her into a strong and young woman. She gave her ornaments to wear. Her ornaments consisted of bangles, *Vyara Thodu* and *Addikai*. *Vyara Thodu* is a pair of ear-rings studded with diamonds. *Addikai* is a kind of necklace studded with stones and having a pendal.

The Goddess also gave her new silk sari and a silk blouse. She wore the sari and the ornaments and

fell down prostrate in front of the Goddess and took her leave and came back home. When she reached home her son was very happy. But her daughter-in-law started feeling very jealous because her own mother was quite old. She wanted that her mother also should become young again and start walking like her mother-in-law.

Two days passed. She called her husband and said, "Your mother has become young again. Do you not think that my mother also should become young like her. Tomorrow you take my mother to the forest and leave her at the same place where you left your mother and you hide yourself behind any tree. After the Goddess of forest gives her the boon you bring back my mother."

The husband agreed.

The next morning both the husband and his mother-in-law started on their journey. The wife



gave one packet containing rice and curd to her husband and one packet containing soft soil to her mother as she had done to her mother-in-law. When both of them reached the thick forest near the stream they thought of taking rest. They sat there for some time. The mother-in-law, as she was very tired after the walk fell asleep. Her son-in-law caught hold of the opportunity and went and hid himself behind a tree. When his mother-in-law got up she could not find her son-in-law. She started weeping loudly. The Goddess of forest came as before. She asked, "Mother why are you weeping?" The old lady said, "I can not find my son-in-law who came alongwith me and hence I am weeping." The Goddess said, "Mother, do not worry. You will be seeing your son-in-law very soon. What have you in that packet." The old lady said, "That is a packet containing curd and rice." The Goddess then said, "Let us both eat this food," and so saying she opened the packet but when she found soft soil in place of curd and rice she got very angry and cursed the old lady and said, "You cheated me by saying that it contained curd and rice when it contained soft soil. You will be transformed into a donkey by the time you reach home," and she disappeared. The old lady felt very sorry. She got up and started walking. Her foot turned into a donkey's fore-foot. Her face also changed into a donkey's face. Slowly and gradually the tail also came up. The ears started growing up. People gathered there to see her slowly transforming into a donkey. As soon as the donkey saw the crowd it started braying.

When they reached home the lady of the house opened the door and she asked her husband where her mother was and whose donkey it was. The husband was in a fix for some time and did not know what to say. Then he said, "Gradually my mother-in-law was transformed into a donkey while coming back home." Saying this he narrated the whole incident. At that very time the donkey started braying as if she was

talking to her daughter. Her daughter had no other way out but to stay with the donkey-mother. But this made her change and she began to treat her mother-in-law well and pray. After sometime the Goddess of forest took pity and changed the donkey into the true mother-in-law.



THE THREE DEAF PERSONS

A Brahmin and his wife were living in a village named Pallam in Kerala State. Both of them were deaf. As they were very poor one day they used to make *Kerai Kuttu** and the next day *Puli Yetta Kerai*** They were just passing their days in acute distress. One day the husband liked *Puli Yetta Kerai* very much. He asked his wife to make the food the next day. The deaf wife could not follow her husband's instructions and made *Kerai Kuttu* as usual. When the husband found that his wife had not cooked as desired by him he got very angry. He took the *Kerai Kari**** and threw it on the wall and went outside full of anger. The wife took her food and cooked *Puli Yetta Kerai* the next day.

The Brahmin who was full of anger went and sat in a meeting place of deaf persons. There he met a cowherd who was deaf and who had lost his cow and calf a few days ago. The cowherd came near the Brahmin and said, "I shall be grateful if you kindly consult the almanac and tell me in which direction I should search for them."

The deaf Brahmin could not follow what the cowherd said. He got very angry for troubling him and showed his hand in anger. The cowherd thought that the Brahmin was showing the direc-

* *Kerai Kuttu* is prepared by just cooking spinach with a little salt. It is then churned with the help of a churning stick. A little mustard and red chillies are fried in oil and put in the spinach to add to the taste and flavour.

** *Puli Yetta Kerai* is prepared just like *Kerai Kuttu*, the only difference being a little tamarind is put while cooking.

*** *Kari* - Any cooked vegetable is called a *Kari*.

tion where he should search his cow and calf. He thanked the Brahmin and said that if he found them there he would give his calf to him. So saying he went that direction. Luckily he found his cow and calf grazing in the fields in that direction. He was very happy and to give him the calf he came to the place where the Brahmin was sitting.

He said to the Brahmin, "Sir, your prediction came out true. As promised by me I am giving you this calf as a gift." Saying this he handed over the calf to him. That calf had a very small tail. The Brahmin misunderstood the cowherd's request. He thought that he was blaming him for cutting its tail. The Brahmin showed his hand telling him that he had not done such a thing. The cowherd thought that the Brahmin was asking for the cow also along with the calf. He said, "I promised to give you only the calf. Why are you asking for the cow? You seem to be very greedy." The Brahmin kept on saying that he did not cut the tail of his calf. Both of them started quarrelling.

A clever man watched all this. He thought that he could make money from the foolishness of these two persons. He came near and told them that he would settle the affair. He called the cowherd aside and said, "Astrologers are always greedy. You give me the calf. I will make him agree and give him the calf. You take the cow and go away." The cowherd was very happy to hear this and he drove the cow and reached home.

The clever man then came near the astrologer and said, "Did you see the cleverness of that cowherd? He is going to the nearby town to bring his uncle here to report to him about the tail of this calf. You do not worry. You quickly get up and go home." The clever man thanked his stars and took the calf and reached home.

The Brahmin was greeted by his wife. She kept one plantain leaf in front of him. As they were very poor the wife did not put a new plantain leaf but she used the same old one. The Brahmin saw a little *Kerai Kari* in the leaf. He liked it and liked it very much. He asked his wife to serve the same *Kari*. But as the wife had already finished her food there was no *Kari* left and she showed her hand indicating thereby that there was nothing left for him. The Brahmin got very angry and said, "Whatever is sticking on the walls, take out that and put that to me." The poor wife did as she was asked to do. The poor Brahmin was in constant troubles as he could not make himself understood.



MONKEY LOSING THE TAIL

A monkey was once eating berries in a thick forest. Suddenly a thorn pricked his tail. Even after trying many times he could not take it out. Then he went to a barber and said, "Uncle, uncle a thorn has pricked me on my tail. I shall be grateful if you kindly take out the thorn with your knife." The barber tried his best in taking out the thorn but he failed. At last he cut the tip of his tail with his knife.

The monkey started shouting and said, "Either you fix my tail or else you give me the knife." The barber had no other way out. He threw the knife in front of the monkey.

The naughty monkey was passing through a forest. There he saw an old lady who was breaking and collecting branches of trees and tying them into small bundles. The monkey went near her and said, "Mother, why are you breaking it with your hand. Take my knife and do it." The old lady was very happy. She took the knife and started cutting the wood with it and tied them into bundles. When she finished her work she gave back the knife to the monkey and thanked him. The monkey saw the knife and said, "Mother, you have spoiled my knife. It has become blunt. Either you give me a new knife or you give me wood." The lady had no other way. She gave him a portion of the wood she had collected and went away.

The monkey kept the bundles of wood on his back and was going his way. He came across another lady,

on her way. She was making *Dosai*.* The moment the monkey heard the sound "*Choui*" its mouth started watering. The monkey came near the old lady and said, "I have brought wood from the forest for your use. You may use them and we both will eat *Dosas*."

The old lady kept all the *Dosas* in a basket. As soon as she made all the *Dosas* the monkey said, "Give back my wood to me or you give all the *dosas*." The old lady had no way out. She handed over the basket containing all the *Dosas* to the monkey.

The monkey then came across a *Parayan***. He had a *Parai**** in his hand. The monkey ate four or five *dosas* and gave the rest to the *Parayan* and asked for his *Parai*. The *Parayan* gave his *Parai* to him and went away.

The monkey then sat on a banyan tree and went on singing merrily all the things he did for getting a *Parai*.



* *Doasi* - Rice and Urad Dal are separately soaked in water in the ratio of 3 : 1. These are then ground into a thin paste and mixed together. A little salt is put and kept overnight. A little oil is put on a hot *tava*. *Tava* is a round plate of iron on which bread is baked. A little dough is taken and spread on the *tava*. After some time it is turned over. It makes a *Choui* sound when turned over. It is then cooked to a golden colour.

** *Parayan* is a harijan.

*** *Parai* is a type of band which is struck when some announcement is to be made.

HUSBAND MORE KIND THAN WIFE

A Brahmin wanted to be charitable and decided to give food to whosoever came near his house. But his wife was narrow-minded. Whenever the Brahmin used to bring any one to the house he used to make them sit in the verandah. The wife used to seek an opportunity when the husband was away from the guest. She used to go near the verandah and say, "It seems that he has no children. Why should he come here for food? Cannot he go to the *Ottuparai** and take his food?" People having a little self-respect used to go back home. Very few used to stay on and take food in the Brahmin's house.

One fine morning a worshipper of Lord Shiva came near the house and said, "Can I get food here today?" The man had a *Rudraksha mala***. The Brahmin very kindly asked him to sit in the verandah and went to take his bath in the pond. The Brahmin's wife came and saw the guest. As he was a great devotee of Lord Shiva he had no guts to speak in front of him. She thought of a plan.

She made a big *Kolam**** in the front room. Right in the centre of the *Kolam* she kept a wooden hammer. She then went near the guest and said, "Lord, you think of all your relatives and friends, because within half an hour you will lose your life." The guest asked, "What is the matter?" She said, "What to say. My husband breaks the head of one

* *Ottuparai* is a place where food is given free for three days.

** *Rudraksha mala* is a special kind of necklace the beads of which are made up of wood. They are 108 in number. Devotees of God put on this necklace.

*** *Kolam* - Rice is soaked in water and ground into a very fine paste. With the help of this paste different designs are made on the floor.

person every day with this hammer before he takes his food."

No sooner did the guest hear it than he cursed the Brahmin, took his bag and ran away.



The Brahmin came after his bath and finding the guest missing he came to the front room and saw the hammer. He called his wife and said, "What is the matter for?" His wife said, "That Brahmin asked for this hammer which I brought from my home after my marriage. I refused to give it to him. So he ran away."

Hearing this the Brahmin scolded his wife and thought of giving the hammer to him and bringing him back for lunch. He took the hammer and chased him. The guest turned back and saw the Brahmin with a hammer in his hand chasing him. He thanked his stars and praised the Brahmin's wife and thought that he would have died that day had he not been warned.

The Brahmin got very tired after chasing him to some distance and returned home.

WIFE MORE KIND THAN HUSBAND

THERE was once a big business man. He was a great miser. His wife was very good and kind. She felt very sorry for her husband being a miser. She used to invite people and give them food and money when her husband was not in the house. Her husband used to scold her for doing such a thing.

In a nearby town there was a bachelor. He was very clever. He wanted to get money from the miser. One day he reached the miser's house and sat in the verandah. The miser was not present in the house at that time.

The miser's wife came running and asked, "Who are you ? Where from have you come?" Please come and sit down. "The clever man said, "Mother, I came from heaven only in the morning. Your father-in-law and mother-in-law are seeing bad days there. When they came to know that I was coming to the earth they asked me to do one favour for them. They asked me to get something from you for their use. I could not possibly see their suffering. They do not even have proper cloth. That is why I have come to you straight" The lady believed each and every word. She went inside the house and packed up her sarees, her husband's shirts and dhoties and her ornaments and gave them to the bachelor and requested him to take them to her father-in-law. The clever bachelor left the house before the miser came back.

When the miser came back home, he searched for his *dhoti* to change his dress. But as he could not find it he asked his wife. She said, "You are so rich, you can buy some more dhoties for yourself." When the husband came to know about all that had happened he got very angry. He told his wife that the

bachelor had cheated her and asked her the way he went. He took a horse and followed him. When the bachelor saw the miser following him he doubled his speed. He caught hold of a tree and sat on the branch. The miser asked him to come down. But the bachelor gathered courage and said that 'that was the way to heaven. The miser kept his horse there and started climbing the tree. The clever man went on moving from one branch to the other and when he could not escape he jumped from the tree over the horse and went into the thick forest. The miser started walking on foot.

His wife asked him whether he had met the man going to heaven. He said, "I met him and gave him my horse to enable him to go on horse rather than on foot."

The miser thus lost both his horse and riches.



SOMEONE IS REMEMBERING

TWO friends named Keshavan and Murlidharan were living in a place named Telicherry. They had their own fields. They used to go together to the fields. It was the harvesting time. So they did not get time to go home for lunch. They asked their wives to send packed lunch for them. Their wives sent food through one Brahmin boy who was learning *Vedas* those days.

At about twelve O'clock all the workers went for lunch. Both the friends took their lunch packets and went and sat under a big banyan tree near a pond. Both of them opened their packets. No sooner had Keshavan started taking his food than he started coughing. Murlidharan said, "Why are you coughing?" Keshavan then said, "This is not called coughing but it is known as *Purai-Yerudal*. (*Purai-Yerudal* means coughing due to clogging of throat with food-particles). This usually comes when a well wisher of yours remembers you while you are taking food. My wife loves me and she is remembering me now. Had your wife loved you, would you not have had *Purai-Yerudal*?" Murlidharan felt bad on hearing this and he thought of scolding his wife in the evening. After finishing their lunch they again reached the fields and worked. They asked their servants to come half an hour early the next day and went back home.

Murlidharan called his wife and said, "Keshavan's wife remembers her husband all the time. That is why he gets *Purai Yerudal*. You never think of me. Had you thought of me I too would have had *Purai*." Saying this he started beating his wife. His wife thought that her husband was a great fool and that it was not easy to convince him. She said, "I am sorry I could not think of you in the afternoon because I

slept. I will think of you tomorrow very 'often.' Murlidharan told Keshavan that as his wife slept in the afternoon so she could not think of him and that she would think of him the next day.

The next morning both Keshavan and Murlidharan went to the fields after taking their bath. Murlidharan's wife powdered some roasted red chillies and mixed it with curd and rice, and without adding salt gave it to her husband. Both the friends started reaping the fields and at about twelve O'clock they went for lunch. They sat under the same banyan tree. No sooner had Murlidharan opened his lunch packet than he started coughing. He could not possibly check his cough. He said, "Please stop remembering me. Yesterday I gave you a good beating for not remembering me. Today I will beat you more for remembering me more. Do not think of me please." Keshavan could not help laughing. Murlidharan then said, "Yesterday I beat her that is why she is thinking of me so much." He went home in the evening and praised his wife for remembering him so much.



THE STORY OF A SPIRIT

IN days of yore there was a poor Brahmin in a small village Manarkad. He once decided to go to Kashi. So he took some *Kattu Chadam** and started on his journey. In those days people used to travel only on foot. He felt hungry, so he thought of taking his food. The moment he was going to sit he heard a voice, "Please do not sit here." He walked a few more steps and got some water to wash his mouth. Again he heard a voice saying "Do not gargle with this water." He did not pay heed to those words and quickly washed his hands, gargled and sat there to take his food. Again he heard a voice, "Please do not eat here." After finishing his food there the Brahmin started on his journey. Then again, he heard, "Please do not go."

The Brahmin gathered courage and asked loudly who he was and why he was saying like that and where he was hiding.

A spirit which was sitting on a tree called him and said that it was he who had said all that. The Brahmin came near the tree and looked at the spirit. The spirit started saying that in the previous life he was a Brahmin and he was an expert musician. As he did not teach that art to anyone in his life time he had become a spirit. He also said that in a nearby temple there was a musician who did not know how to sing and that his music had bored him enough and that he would be grateful if he took him and placed him on another tree.

The Brahmin pitied the spirit and promised to place him on another tree. He also told the spirit

* *Kattu Chadam* means rice and curd mixed together with a little salt to add to the taste. This food lasts for sometime and is much prized as a snack.

that he must do something in exchange for this favour. The spirit promised to do some favour. The Brahmin picked up the spirit and placed him on another tree. The spirit said to the Brahmin, "I will remove your poverty and make you a rich man. I am now going to Mysore and will enter the body of the King's daughter and will trouble her a lot. Till you come there I will not leave the body. When you come I shall leave the body quickly and go away. You will get riches from the King for this. But I may tell you one thing. After this if I enter any other body you should not come there. If you happen to come I shall kill you. Now go to Kashi and come back."

The Brahmin went to Kashi and stayed there for some time. He thought of what he had been told by the spirit and he went to Mysore. Then he stayed with his auntie and asked her whether there was anything new in that place. She said, "A spirit has entered the body of the King's daughter and no one has been able to drive him away. The King has announced a rich reward to anyone who succeeds in driving the spirit away."

The Brahmin went straight to the King and said, "O King ! I will drive away the spirit. Kindly give me permission." The King who had lost all hopes never believed that the Brahmin would be able to drive away the spirit. But he gave his permission and assured him of the reward that he would give him on his success.

The Brahmin went to the room where the King's daughter was sitting. He asked everyone to leave the room. As soon as the spirit saw the Brahmin he said, "I was waiting all these days for you. Now I am leaving this body but please remember if you come anywhere where I go I will kill you." So saying he left the body and went away. Everybody was sur-

prised to find the King's daughter absolutely normal. The King gave him a lot of money and also a village. The Brahmin got married and was leading a peaceful life.

The spirit then entered the body of the daughter of the King of Trivandrum. They all tried their level best in driving away the spirit but did not succeed. The Trivandrum King came to know about the Brahmin who had succeeded in driving away the spirit from the body of the daughter of the Mysore King. He sent a letter to the King of Mysore asking him to send the magician and that he would reward him amply. The Mysore King sent for the Brahmin and asked him to go to Trivandrum. The Brahmin was in a fix. He did not know what to do. He thought that if he went to Trivandrum he would lose his life and if he did not go then the Mysore King would put him to death. He decided to go to Trivandrum and see the spirit and die there. He made all kind of arrangements and took leave from his wife and started for Trivandrum. He passed two months saying that it was not the proper time. At the end he found no other way out and went to the King's palace.

He thought of God, encouraged himself and went to the room where the King's daughter was sitting. As soon as the spirit saw him he shouted, "I will kill you." So saying he took a hammer in his hand and came near him. The Brahmin gathered courage and said, "If you do not leave the body now I will call the same musician here." On hearing the musician's name the spirit did not know what to do. He quickly left the body and ran away. The daughter became normal again. The King was very happy and the Brahmin was amply rewarded.

The Brahmin left for Mysore with all his presents and stayed happily ever after with his family.

A FAVOURABLE TIME

LONG ago there was a King. He was sitting with his minister on the terrace and was discussing various problems. The controversy was about the superiority of will-force over circumstances. The King was of the opinion that a man could do everything by his efforts. The minister was of the opinion that time factor is a great help to man.

When both of them were thus talking, they saw a poor man passing that way. He was selling fibres. The King pointed to the poor man and told the minister that he would make him rich in the course of one month. He called the poor man and gave him five hundred rupees and asked him to boost up his business. The minister, however, said, "With this money alone he cannot become rich. He must have a favourable time also."

When the poor man got five hundred rupees his happiness knew no bounds. He took out ten rupees and the rest of the money he tied in a dirty piece of cloth and kept on his head. With the ten rupees he bought some fibres and eatables. Suddenly an eagle came and wanted to snatch the eatables but failing to get it took the dirty piece of cloth from his head and flew away. When the poor man reached home he told everything to his wife and again started passing his days in poverty.

After a few days the King and the minister went to his place to find out what he had done with that money. The poor man narrated what had happened. The King was amused. He gave him another five hundred rupees and asked him to do his business with more care. The minister again reminded the King that a favourable time is needed to become rich. The poor man took the money and kept it very carefully.

He did not even tell his wife about it. He kept it in a *Kudam** containing husk. He went to the market one day. At that time a man came to his house to buy some husk from him. The poor man's wife thought that as they were collecting husk from a long time it would be good if she disposed it of and utilised the money for some purpose. She brought out the *Kudam* and kept it in front of him. As the man had not brought any vessel or basket to carry the husk he told her to give the husk along with the *Kudam*. He was ready to pay the price for the *Kudam*. The lady gave the *Kudam* and got the price for it. The man took it to the market and wanted to sell it. But as the husk was very old so it could not be sold. He kept the *Kudam* in a corner of the house.

When the poor man returned from the market he searched for the *Kudam* but failing to find it there he asked his wife for it. His wife told him that she had sold it to a man who had come to buy husk from her a few hours before. The poor man wringing his hands in utter despondency told his wife that he had kept five hundred rupees which he had received from the King a second time in that *Kudam*. The wife also felt sorry and blamed her husband for not telling her about it before. Again they started passing their days as before.

Again the King and his minister came to the poor man's house. The poor man told him everything that had happened. The King realized that what the minister had said was coming out true everytime. The minister then picked up a nut and gave it to the poor man saying that if he was fortunate enough he would become a rich man with the help of that nut. Both the King and the minister went back to the palace. That night a fisherman was inspecting his

Kudam is a vessel like a pitcher made of brass or mud.

net for using it the next day. But one nut was missing in the net, and as he could not find the nut anywhere he went to buy one. He went on asking each and every one but he could not get it any where. Ultimately he came to the poor man's house and asked for a nut. The poor man quickly gave the nut to him. The fisherman felt very happy and said, "As you have helped me at the right time I shall give you the first fish that will be caught in my net tomorrow morning."

The fisherman set his net right and caught a very big fish in the morning and handed it over to the poor man. The poor man thought of cooking that and so he took a big knife and cut it into two. Suddenly he found a very big diamond in the belly of the fish. He took it in his hand and was watching it very carefully. At that time a jeweller's wife, who was his neighbour, came to take a little fire from him. She saw the diamond and informed her husband about it. The jeweller came to his house and asked the poor man to sell the diamond to him. The poor man asked one lac *Varakan** for that. The jeweller estimated its price to be fifty lacs so he quickly gave one lac *Varakan* and took the diamond from him. The poor man built a fine house. His business also prospered.

The King and his minister visited the poor man's house. They found a fine house in place of a hut. They found the poor man sitting on a sofa. As soon as he saw the King and his minister he greeted them and requested them to take food in his house that day. Both the King and the minister agreed. He gave a grand lunch to them. After that all of them were sitting in the lawn and were discussing different matters.

At that time poor man's son was troubling him for getting the kite which had got stuck in a tree. The poor man asked a servant to climb

* *Varakan* - One Varakan is nearly equal to three and a half rupees.

the tree and get the kite for him. The coachman who had brought the King and his minister there, came and told the King that the bullocks were very hungry and that he should give them some husk. The King asked the poor man for the husk. The poor man sent another servant to bring husk from the market. The servant who had climbed the tree for taking out the kite brought a dirty cloth bundle which had got entangled with the kite. At that very time the servant who had gone to fetch husk brought one *Kudam* full of husk. The poor man was surprised to see all this. He quickly opened the bundle and told the King that he had spent ten rupees and the remaining four hundred and ninety rupees were there in that bundle. He also said that the *Kudam* belonged to him and that the five hundred rupees which he had given to him the second time were also there. The King was very happy. From that day onwards the King believed that there is also a tide in one's fortune and everything cannot be done by one's efforts.



A STIFF LESSON TO THE MONEYLENDER

ONCE upon a time a farmer borrowed one thousand *Varakan** from a Chettiar. The Chettiers belong to the business community. The farmer did not return the money on the appointed day. He went on saying, "I will give back the money tomorrow." A few years passed by. The Chettiar went to his place many times. Finally the farmer fixed one day and asked the Chettiar to come to his place and collect the money.

The appointed day came and the Chettiar thought, "Today I will certainly get back the money." Thinking this he started for the farmer's house. The



* *Varakan* is a gold coin. One *Varakan* is nearly equal to three and a half rupees.

farmer saw the Chettiar coming to his house. Suddenly he got up and took some tamarind seeds in a basket and went into the fields. He was busy sowing some tamarind seeds in the field and watering them.

The Chettiar knocked at the door and asked, "Where is the master of this house?" When he came to know that the farmer was in the fields he went there and stood before him. The farmer did not raise his head. He was busy sowing the tamarind seeds and watering them. His wife was also standing before him watching him curiously as to what his motive was in sowing the seed at such time. She, however, reminded him about the arrival of Chettiar.

The Chettiar came and looked at the farmer and said, "Why are you not paying attention to me? Don't you remember the appointed date?" The farmer then said, "Why are you asking me this particular question? Can't you see, I am doing only your work at present?" "If that is so, I am very happy." Kindly give back my *Varakan*."

The farmer replied "Now I am sowing tamarind seeds, after the seeds sprout and grow into a tree and tamarinds appear, I shall get money by selling them. I shall pay you back as soon as I get the money. The Chettiar got very angry but he gave a laugh at the absurdity of the story. Seeing him laugh the farmer said, "Oh, you are very happy and smiling because you have come to know that your money will be paid back soon." The Chettiar did not know what to reply as the farmer was so foolish. In the meanwhile the farmer slipped back into his hut.

The Chettiar returned cursing the farmer all the way.

THE SERVANT'S PLAN

ONCE upon a time there was a rich man who had a very clever servant. One day the master brought two Mulgova* mangoes and gave them to his servant and asked him to peel off the skin and cut them into pieces. He told him that a friend of his was coming and that he should bring the pieces of mangoes along with two tumblers of coffee on his arrival.

The servant started peeling the mangoes. In order to taste it he cut a piece and put it into his mouth. The mango was so tasty that he could not resist the temptation of eating up the pieces he had made. In this way he ate both the mangoes. Only after finishing them he realized that he would be taken to task by his master. While he was just pondering over this his master asked him whether he had peeled the mangoes.

The servant showed him a blunt knife and said, "This knife is blunt. It has to be sharpened before peeling the mangoes. Now I am a little busy." The master immediately took the knife from his hand and started sharpening it on a piece of stone.

Soon after the master's friend came. The servant went near him and asked, "Who are you? Are you not on good terms with the master of this house? He told me that he was sharpening his knife in order to cut both your ears. What wrong have you done to him? Come here. I will show you." Saying this he showed through the window his master who was busy in sharpening the knife.

* Mulgova mango is quite common in the summer months in Andhra Pradesh.

• His friend saw him and was taken aback. He started running homewards thinking that there must be some reason of his getting angry with him.

The servant now went near his master and said, "Your friend is running with both the mangoes in his hand." The master came out of his house and saw him running. He followed his friend to get back at least one mango from him. While he was thus running with the knife in his hand he was shouting, "Only one. At least you give only one and then you can go."

On hearing this his friend doubled his speed because he thought that he was asking for at least one of his ears. The master who was by now exhausted returned home.

In this way the clever servant ate up the two tasty mulgova mangoes and saved himself.

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THE BRAHMIN AND THE TIGER

ONCE a Brahmin was going from one place to another. One day he found a cage on his way. The people of that town had put a tiger inside the cage. The tiger saw the Brahmin going that way and said, "My dear friend! Have pity on me. I am very thirsty. I have not been able to take water for the last so many days. If you only open the door of this cage for a few minutes I shall go and drink water quickly and come back to this cage. If only you do this favour for me you will go to heaven." The Brahmin, as soon as he heard this, said, "I will never open the door. If I open won't you eat me up?"

The tiger requested once again to open the door. The Brahmin took pity on the tiger and opened the door.

The tiger bounced on the Brahmin and was ready to devour him. The Brahmin somehow gathered courage and said, "Let us ask at least six persons whether what you are doing is just or not. If even one person says that it is a just action you may gladly eat me up." The tiger agreed to the proposal. Both of them started on their journey searching for a judge.

They came across a big banyan tree. The Brahmin, as soon as he saw the tree said, "O Banyan tree! You have to do justice and solve our problem."

The banyan tree agreed to solve their problem. The Brahmin then told everything to the banyan tree and asked whether it was proper for the tiger to eat him up.

After hearing what the Brahmin had said the banyan tree said, "On all hot days people come and

sit under my shade and while they leave the place they cut plenty of fine branches and leaves and take that with them. Men are ungrateful and treacherous. So tigers can tear them to pieces."

No sooner did the tiger hear the decision than it got ready to eat the Brahmin. But the Brahmin requested and said, "You have promised to take decision from six persons. So let us take the decision of the other five." The tiger agreed and they proceeded ahead. They came across a camel. The Brahmin stopped and requested him to give his opinion. The camel patiently heard the case and said, "I have been serving my master for the last so many years. I used to carry heavy loads on my back and now when I am old my master does not even feed me properly. He treats me very badly. Men are not to be sympathised with. Only if we finish them other animals can live peacefully on this earth. So the tiger can devour the man."

The tiger would have eaten the Brahmin but he was reminded of the promise that six judges should be consulted. They again started moving. They came across a bull. The Brahmin narrated everything to the bull and asked for his opinion. The bull said, "I have been serving my master for the last so many years and now that I have become old my master takes no pity on me and has left me in the jungle. Men are faithless. Hence the tiger has the right to eat the Brahmin."

The Brahmin did not lose hope even after asking three persons. He saw an eagle flying high up in the sky. He called the eagle and requested him to do justice and settle their affair. He narrated the whole story to him.

The eagle said, "Men are not to be pitied. Whenever they see us they shoot us. They also take away our eggs. So the tiger has every right to eat up the Brahmin."

When the tiger heard four of them speaking in his favour he bounced in joy and told the Brahmin, "Do you still expect that somebody will speak in favour of you? I am feeling very hungry. Let me eat you up." The Brahmin gathered courage and said, "We have to hear the decision of two more persons. Let us see what they have to say." So saying he took the tiger along with him and went ahead. He saw a crocodile. The Brahmin thought that at least he would get a favourable decision from the crocodile. He narrated the story to him and asked for his opinion.

The crocodile said, "No sooner do we lift our head from the water than the men come and kill us. So long as men are living on this earth we can never enjoy. So the tiger must eat the Brahmin."

Hearing the crocodile's decision the Brahmin thought that he was bound to lose his life. Even then he gathered courage and requested the tiger to hear of the decision of one more person. They saw a fox going that way. The Brahmin called the fox and told everything to him and asked his opinion.

The fox said, "As a judge I must see everything with my own eyes before I give my final decision." Both the Brahmin and the tiger along with the fox came to the place where the cage was kept. As soon as they reached there the fox said to the Brahmin, "You stand exactly at the same place where you were standing previously." The Brahmin went and stood near the cage. The fox again asked, "Is that the place?" Then the fox turned towards the tiger and said, "Where were you standing?" The tiger said, "I was standing inside the cage." The fox said, "How were you standing inside the cage? Which way were you facing?" The tiger, as soon as he heard this, went inside the cage and stood there in the way he was standing. The fox then said that unless and until he knows everything he cannot pass his judgement.

Then he asked, "Was the door of this cage open or closed at that time?" The Brahmin said, "The door was locked." The fox then asked the Brahmin to close and lock the door. The Brahmin did as ordered.

Then the fox turned towards the tiger and said, "You were thirsty. Taking pity on you the Brahmin opened the door and you were ready to devour him. No one will now come and open the door. You have to spend the rest of your life inside this cage. I take leave from you." Then turning towards the Brahmin he said, "My dear friend, you go home. There is no fear now. Good bye." The fox then ran away.

The Brahmin was tired. He started walking and reached his house at the dead of the night. The tiger, on the other hand, was confined inside the cage. It died after a few days due to hunger and thirst.



THE THIEVES AND THE ASTROLOGER

ONCE upon a time there were some thieves in a town. In the same town also lived an astrologer. The thieves used to consult the astrologer for the appropriate time to go and steal. Wherever the thieves went after consulting the astrologer they got plenty of things. They used to give the astrologer a portion of their loot.

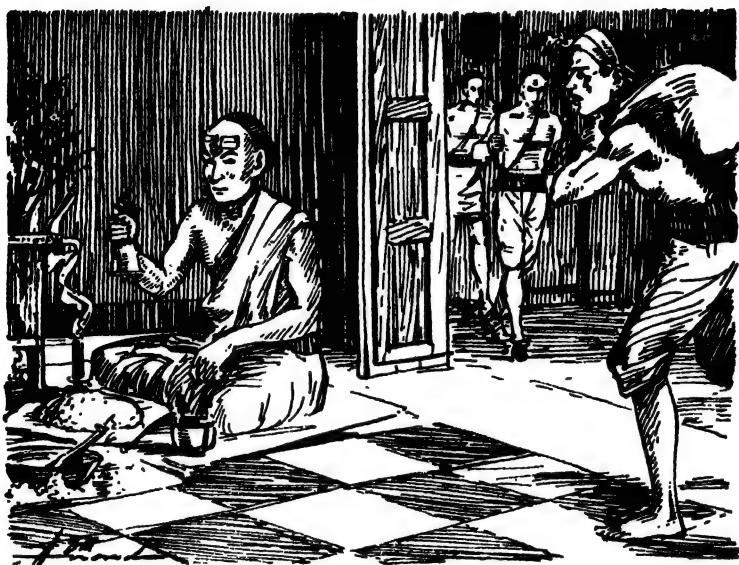
The astrologer once thought of accompanying the thieves and sharing the goods they stole. He consulted the almanac and found out an appropriate time and said to the thieves, "Friends ! I am going to perform the marriage ceremony of my son and for that I will be needing a big sum. I shall accompany you all and then we will distribute the stolen goods among ourselves. Kindly accept me as your partner."

The thieves said, "Why should you undergo such a menial task. You cannot take as much pains as we can. We will give you four hundred *Varakan*. (*Varakan* is a gold coin. One *Varakan* is nearly equal to three and a half rupees.) You can perform your son's marriage with that money." The astrologer did not listen to them and said, "I must accompany you." So saying he accompanied them.

They all entered a Madhava Brahmin's house. The Madhavas belong to a particular sect among the Brahmins. It was *Ekadashi* night. *Ekadashi* is the eleventh day after the full moon. All the members of the family had observed a fast and they had collected everything for lunch on *Dwadashi*. *Dwadashi* is the twelfth day after full moon. The inmates were fast asleep in the latter part of the night.

In Southern India people after observing the fast on *Ekadashi* make special items of food for Dwa-

dashi as for example *Myrobalan Pachhdi*, *Atti Kerai Poduttval* and *Rasam*. *Myrobalan Pachhdi* is prepared by putting ground myrobalan in curd. Mustard and salt are added to taste. *Atti Kerai* is a kind of spinach. *Atti Kerai* is cut and prepared by adding oil, mustard, red chillies and a little salt. *Rasam* is prepared by boiling tamarind water, salt and chillies. Coriander leaves, mustard are also added.



The thieves went into the house and started searching each and every corner. They stole jewellery worth one thousand five hundred 'Varakan' and they went towards the kitchen to find out whether they could get something more. The astrologer was busy cooking in the kitchen. The thieves said, "Come along, Brāhmin, we should not stay here any longer."

The astrologer said, "Wait for ten minutes. The lunch is ready. Rasam has to boil and I have

to make *Pachhdi*.” So saying he went outside in search of banana leaves for serving. In the South usually food is served on banana leaves.

When the astrologer saw the bell and the ‘*Basil Madam*’ he thought it to be wrong to take food without doing the *pooja*. Basil plant is planted specially in a raised rectangular tank and it is called Basil Madam. He took the cooked food and kept it near the Madam and started ringing the bell. The people of the house woke up and before the thieves could run away they caught hold of them and handed them over to the police. They pitied the astrologer and did not hand him over to the police. They invited him for the Dwadashi lunch and after hearing his story gave him one hundred Varakan and bade him good bye.

The thieves received a proper punishment for what they had done.



DECEIVING THE DECEIVER

This is a story of a cheat who was outwitted by cleverness.

A person named Gangabandhulu came to the court of Akbar with some complaint. Gangabandhulu was a rich merchant in Delhi. He wanted to go to Varanasi. As no one was in his house he wanted to deposit his valuables with one Abdul. He deposited his valuables with him on the condition that he must give them back on his return. His valuables consisted of a pair of *Vyara Thodu*, one *Changali*, one *Addikai*, and four gold bangles. *Vyara Thodu* is a pair of ear-rings studded with diamond. *Changali* is a necklace of gold. *Addikai* is also a kind of necklace studded with stones.

When he returned and asked Abdul for these valuables, he said, "When did you keep these things with me ? Why are you lying ? Go and have your way. Do not waste my time." Gangabandhulu came to the King complained and told him everything and requested him to restore the articles to him. Akbar asked his minister to get back the articles of Gangabandhulu from Abdul.

The next morning the minister called Gangabandhulu and said, "Tomorrow at eight o' clock at night I am going to Abdul's place. You should come there at nine o'clock and say, 'Please give back my articles to me. I have come back from Varanasi.' You do not say anything else. You will get back your articles." Gangabandhulu agreed and went home.

The next day the minister went to Abdul's place and said, "Of all the houses, your house seems to be well protected. I am planning to go to Rameshwaram

alongwith my family. I have made all the necessary arrangements for the same. I have come to take your permission to deposit my valuables here. I have packed them all in one box and I shall bring it here tonight. There are some more well protected houses also but as I have no faith in the owners of those houses I have come to you" The cunning Abdul said, "You should deposit your valuables with me and whenever you or persons whom you authorise will come I shall hand over the articles to them." The minister went away saying that he would bring the box at eight o'clock at night.

The minister returned home. He took an old box and filled it with old broken pieces of earthen vessels and locked it up. He took the box and went to Abdul's place. There he sat near him and started talking to him. At that time Gangabandhulu came and said, "Hello, Abdul ! I have come back from Varanasi. Kindly give back my articles to me." Abdul quietly gave his articles to him and said to the minister, "He gave me these articles long back before he left for Varanasi. Now you see that I have returned them. You can have enough faith in me."

The minister was very happy thinking he had done his duty. He handed over his box to him and said, "Kindly take care of this box also like this," so saying he went away.

The next morning the minister told the King as to what he had done. The King was very happy and rewarded him. Abdul opened the box and found he had been outwitted.

THE BULL'S THIEF

ONCE upon a time there was a farmer. He had a bull. Early one morning the farmer could not find his bull in the cattle shed. He started searching for it, but could not find it anywhere. He thought it must have been stolen by a thief. There is a Tamil saying that it is easier to buy eight bulls than to find the lost one. The farmer thought of this proverb and decided to buy a new bull. He went to a nearby village where a big fair was going on. Among the bulls in the fair he saw his own bull. As soon as he saw his bull he bounced upon it and caught hold of it and started shouting "I have found my own bull which was stolen by thieves a few days back."

The thief who had stolen the bull said, "This is my bull. This is with me for the last one year. Probably your bull resembles mine. But this is mine."

Suddenly the farmer closed both the eyes of the bull with his hands and said, "If the bull had been with you for one year you must be knowing everything about it. Tell me which eye of the bull is blind."

The thief who had stolen the bull only a few days back had not seen its eyes so thoroughly. Even then he said boldly, "The left eye of this bull is blind." Suddenly the farmer said, "No, its left eye is not blind." The thief who was a little puzzled said, "Instead of saying right eye, I got puzzled and said left eye. It is blind by right eye."

The farmer said to the thief, "It has been proved that you are a great liar as well as a thief." Then he addressed all the persons gathered there and

said, "Friends, all of you can come and see its eyes. Both the eyes are all right. Only to test this thief I acted like this."

All the persons started shouting, "Catch hold of the thief. See that he does not run away."

The policeman who had come to manage the crowd in the fair caught hold of the thief and took him to the court. The judge heard the story and sentenced him for six months' imprisonment.



TWICE HIT BY SHOE FOR A RUPEE

ONCE upon a time a Mohammedan went to a Chettiar's* shop to buy rice. He was busy calculating a Brahmin's account. So he did not give him rice. The Mohammedan got angry. He asked the Chettiar, "How long have I to wait ?" Saying this he took out one of his shoes and hit him on his head.

• The Chettiar had enough patience. He was not extravagant. Even then on the Brahmin's insistence he went to the court and filed a suit against the Mohammedan. The judge ordered for the Mohammedan and asked him, "Why did you hit the Chettiar ?"

The Mohammedan said to the judge, "I went to buy rice from his shop. But as the Chettiar was busy seeing the account of a Brahmin I had to wait for a long time. I lost my temper and hit him with my shoe."

The judge fined him eight annas and asked him to pay the money to the Chettiar. The Mohammedan quickly took out his other shoe and hit the Chettiar again on his head in front of the judge. The judge then asked him, "Why did you do this ?"

The Mohammedan said, "I have one rupee note. For one hitting you fined me eight annas. I thought of spending the rupee, so I hit him once again. Here is my penalty. Give this to the Chettiar." Saying this he handed over the one rupee note to the judge.

• Everyone in the court saw the rude behaviour of the Mohammedan and spoke ill of him.



* Chettians are Vaishyas. They usually do business.

A villager once went to a *Chandai** and bought something which the people of that village had not seen before. He kept it in his own room and used to see it every day without fail. His wife was curious as she was observing him going to that room every day and having a look into something.

One day the villager forgot to lock his room. His wife caught hold of the opportunity and took the strange thing in her hand and looked into it carefully. She saw a handsome girl wearing *Kashu Mallai***. She said to herself, "He has hid a handsome girl in this thing. That is why he comes here everyday." Thinking this she started weeping.

Her mother-in-law was passing that way. She saw her weeping. She came near and said, "Why are you weeping ? What has happened ?"

"Your son loved me once. But after he has brought something from the *Chandai* he has stopped loving me," said the daughter-in-law with tears in her eyes.

The mother-in-law then said, "You are mad. You do not know how much my son loves you."

The daughter-in-law then narrated the whole story and said that the girl was more handsome than she was. The mother-in-law then chided her and said, "This can never happen. How can he get a more handsome girl than you . Let me also see the girl."

* *Chandai* is a fair.

** *Kashu Mallai* is a necklace where small gold coins are set closely.

• The daughter-in-law then gave that mirror to her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law then saw her own reflection in that mirror. For a little while she saw and then burst out with a loud laughter saying, "You are telling me that she is a handsome girl. She is an old lady with not a single tooth. All her hair have gone grey. Is this the girl with whom my son has fallen in love." The daughter-in-law then said, "I am not telling a lie. When I saw her she was in her real form. Now she is putting on an old lady's dress and wants to deceive us. It seems that she is a witch."

Both the daughter-in-law and her mother-in-law were thus shouting. Suddenly her father-in-law came in. No sooner had he come than his daughter-in-law said, "Your son had hid a very handsome girl inside this thing." The mother-in-law then said, "Our son has hidden an old lady in it. She has no teeth and all her hair have gone grey. She is not a young girl at all." The father-in-law then asked for that thing and saw his own image there. He was surprised that his wife was seeing an old lady and his daughter-in-law was seeing a young girl in place of an old man. He said, "Both of you have gone mad. There is an old man inside it who has no teeth and has a beard. Both of you are mad."

Both of them got angry when they heard this and they started shouting all the more.

One naughty boy was going that side. He was going back home after playing football. He had the ball in his hand. When he heard the noise he stepped inside the house to see what was happening. The daughter-in-law as soon as she saw him gave him the mirror and said, "Please see what is inside this ?"

The boy took it in his hand and saw it very carefully. He saw a naughty boy with a ball in his

hand. He asked, "Why are you looking at me ?" and looked at him with an angry look. That boy also gave him an angry look. The boy then made faces at him. The boy in the mirror also did likewise. He then got very angry and showed his fist to him. The boy in the mirror also lifted up his hand and showed his fist. The boy then said, "You naughty boy, you are showing your fist at me and you have a ball like mine in your hand. I will give you a blow and show how powerful I am." So saying the boy gave a blow. The mirror fell down and broke into pieces.

That strange thing which hid so many things inside it was nothing but a beautiful mirror.



A HUNCHBACK MAN

ONCE upon a time there was a tailor in a town. One evening a hunchback man came in front of his shop and started dancing and singing. The tailor was very happy to see him and he invited him to dinner at his place. The tailor, his wife and his friend sat together for dinner. As the food was very tasty the hunchback was taking bigger morsels each time. While he was relishing the '*Kuttu*'* suddenly a small curry leaf stalk stuck in his throat. He at once fell dead on the ground. The tailor and his wife got frightened. They both thought of a plan. A doctor was living nearby. They carried the dead body to his house. The doctor was busy upstairs and his servant came out and asked, "What is the matter?" "We have brought a patient to be examined by the doctor," they said. The servant went to inform the doctor about the case. When the servant was out



of sight, they left the dead body on the staircase and ran away.

The doctor came hurriedly. As it was dark, he kicked against the dead body unknowingly and it rolled down to the ground floor. A light was brought. The doctor found the patient dead. He was terrified.

The doctor and his wife tied the body with a string and lowered it through a chimney to a room of a big businessman.

The businessman took him to be a thief. He beat him mercilessly. When he went up to him he found the man was dead. He was anxious about his safety. He placed the body against the wall of a shop on the street and returned home.

Early in the morning one religious Brahmin happened to pass by that way for his morning bath. He dashed against the dead body in the dawn and it fell on him. He took him to be a thief and beat him severely. A policeman came there and found the person dead. He arrested the Brahmin and sent him to the court for trial. The judge heard him and declared him guilty. He sentenced the Brahmin to death by hanging although he was a Brahmin and quite religious. The Brahmin was brought to the place of execution. Young and old, men and women all gathered to see the sight. But when he was about to be hanged the businessman came out from the crowd and shouted, "Stop, stop." The judge heard his story and stopped the execution. He set the religious Brahmin free. He found the businessman guilty and sentenced him to death. He was also about to be hanged, when the doctor came running and shouted, "The businessman is innocent. Stop the execution." The judge heard his story. The businessman was released. The judge now declared the doctor to be guilty and sentenced him to death. When the cord was put round his neck the tailor

came shouting. "Do not hang him. He is innocent." He gave out his story. The judge was now in a fix and could not come to a decision. Suddenly he heard a big snoring noise followed closely by a cough. The hunchback coughed once again and the straw came out. He got up and sat as if from a deep slumber. Thus everyone was saved from hanging due to the revival of the hunchback man.

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* *Kuttu* - Kuttu is cooked by putting different kinds of vegetables as raw bananas, potatoes, brinjals etc. Curry leaves and grated and ground coconut and red chillies are also put for adding to the taste.

